

# A LIFE OF JESUS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



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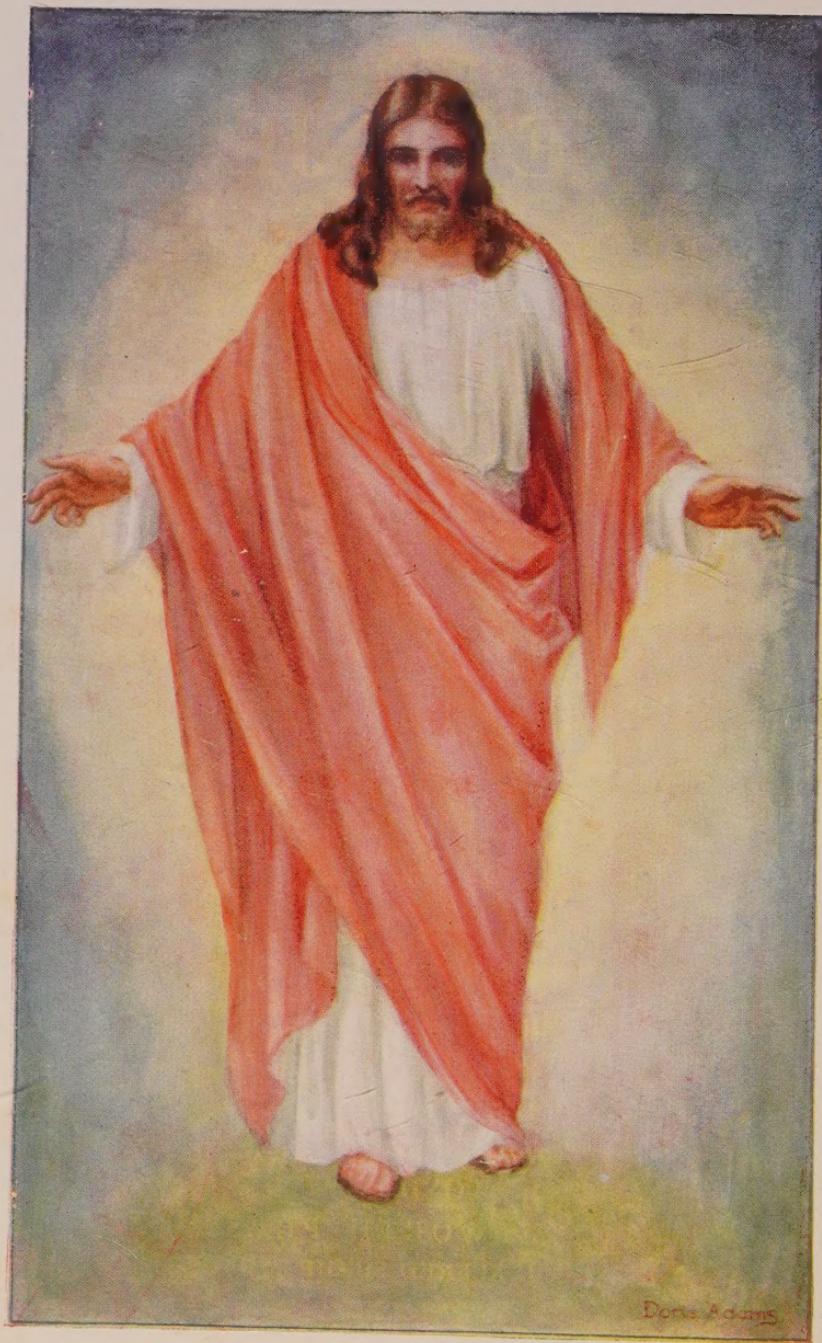
**A LIFE OF JESUS  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**





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'I am the Light of the World.'  
(Face p. 124)

# A LIFE OF JESUS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

BY

R. C. PARKIN

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## PREFACE

IN rewriting the 'Story of the Life of Jesus,' careful attention has been paid to select language that can, it is hoped, be readily understood by young people. To stimulate thought and increase interest in the life of 'Our Blest Redeemer' is the motive in issuing this volume.

The version of most of the legends quoted is that given by Mrs. Arthur Bell in her 'Legends of our Lord.' Mention must also be made of 'The Historical Geography of the Holy Land,' by Dr. George Adam Smith, a work which has been particularly helpful in sketching the historical and geographical background of the book.

If this attempt to portray the beauty of our Lord's life and character—a beauty which no 'tongue nor pen can show'—should awaken in any heart a love for Him who is 'the Fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether Lovely,' it will not have been made in vain.

R. C. P.



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# A LIFE OF JESUS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

## CHAPTER I

### THE HOLY LAND

.... those holy fields,  
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet,  
Which, fourteen hundred years ago, were nail'd,  
For our advantage, on the bitter Cross.

*Henry IV., Part I., Act I.*

PERHAPS some of the boys and girls who read this book will one day visit Palestine, and see for themselves the country to which Jesus Christ came.

He was born into a land which belonged to the great Roman Empire about which you are taught at school. Each Emperor was called by the official title, Cæsar, and at the time of the birth of Jesus the Emperor was Cæsar Augustus.

His territory stretched from Gaul and Spain in Europe, to the river Euphrates in Asia, and from the rivers Rhine and Danube on the north to Egypt and the land of the Moors.

Augustus was very proud of his wealth and influence; he made an edict that a register of the revenues of his dominions should be compiled. One of the countries affected was Palestine, for in St. Luke's gospel we read that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, 'that all the world (*i.e.* the Roman world) should be taxed.'

Although Judæa gave Herod the Great his title,

it was only a small part of the Roman Empire. Through it ran a main road connecting Beersheba, Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. From the Mount of Olives could be seen Jerusalem, with its wonderful Temple of Herod, whose golden roof reflected the rays of the sun.

Deep down in the Jordan valley was Jericho, more than 600 feet below the level of the sea. This valley, in its lower levels, as it nears the Dead Sea, is very hot, the haunt of snakes and wild beasts. It was not safe to leave the sheep and lambs alone, as an eagle might suddenly swoop down from the sky, and carry one of them away. To protect their flocks, shepherds watched carefully all through the long dark night, till the first flush of the Eastern dawn appeared in the sky.

The town in which Jesus was born was 'Bethlehem Ephratah,' or 'Bethlehem of Judæa.' It is about six miles south of Jerusalem. The meaning of Bethlehem is 'House of Bread,' and as Jesus is called in the Gospels the 'Bread of Life,' it is a very suitable name.

Bethlehem was the home of Boaz and Naomi, of Jesse and David. There were enacted the pastoral scenes of which we read in the Book of Ruth. It is quite a small town of two or three thousand inhabitants. These are chiefly peasants, who earn their living by cultivating the land. If you saw it you would be charmed by its beauty.

Bethlehem is situated on a narrow ridge, the sides of which are covered with terraces reaching down to the valley beneath. The slopes are covered with olive trees, vines, and fig trees.

The town has many links to David, one of our favourite Bible heroes. Probably, some of you are called David, like the Prince of Wales. It was here

that Jesse, the father of David, lived. Here David was born. On the surrounding pasture land he kept guard over his father's flocks, and showed his dauntless courage by slaying a lion and a bear that threatened his sheep. Had he not been brave he would have run away, but rather than do such a cowardly thing he risked his own life.

When you grow up, or perhaps before, you may have an opportunity of doing a courageous deed. If at such a time you feel afraid, just think of the heroism of David, the shepherd boy, all alone on the hills of Bethlehem.

It was here, too, that the prophet Samuel anointed David to be the future King of Israel. The young shepherd had seven big, strong, handsome brothers, and Jesse, their father, quite thought Samuel would choose one of them to be king. But to his surprise, and probably to the disappointment of the brothers, the prophet chose young David, who was tending his flocks on the hillside. He became a famous warrior, and led armies against the Philistines, who were the enemies of his country.

He was a fearless leader, and, as every boy knows, slew, with his sling and stone, Goliath, the fierce champion of the Philistines. Later he became a great national hero, and it was the proud boast of Bethlehem to be the 'city of David.'

But the chief glory of Bethlehem is that it was the birthplace of Jesus ; that is why the little country town will always be remembered in history. When we read about it we at once think of the manger in a cattle shed, where the Saviour of the world was born—

He came down to earth from heaven  
Who is God and Lord of all,  
And His shelter was a stable,  
And His cradle was a stall.

All pilgrims who go to Bethlehem visit the Church of the Nativity, which stands over the grotto marking the site of the inn where Jesus was born. The chapel is said to be built just where the stable stood in which Joseph and Mary stayed on that memorable night.

The country is extremely beautiful, the surrounding hills being bright and fragrant with flowers. Some of them, such as the tulip and iris, scarlet anemone and hollyhock, can be seen in your own English garden. Jesus was a keen lover of the country, and found great delight in its sights and sounds ; the birds, the shepherd and his flock, the red sky at sunset, the vine-clad hills, and the 'lilies of the field.'

In the East the setting sun paints the sky with wonderful colours, and the clouds take on all the hues of the rainbow. At the close of a hot summer day Jesus would go to the lake of Gennesaret with the disciples, and by its cool blue waters find rest and refreshment. At other times He withdrew from the city to the solitude of the hills to spend the night alone in prayer. The Roman rule in the provinces was very harsh, but to conciliate the Jews they granted a measure of Home Rule, so long as the native princes were willing to carry out the wishes of the Emperor. During our Lord's ministry Herod Antipas was the ruling native prince.

His share of the country included Galilee and Peræa. Nazareth was in Galilee, and therefore Herod Antipas was the prince under whom Jesus grew up. His palace was at Tiberias, on the shores of the sea of Galilee.

The only name of contempt ever given by Jesus to a fellow man was to this prince. He called him 'that fox,' and we can gather from this something

of Herod's character. Another important province of Palestine was Samaria, which lay between Galilee and Judæa. It takes its name from its capital, a city some six miles from Shechem. In our Lord's time Samaria was a prosperous city, with its busy streets and gay bazaars; an important centre of trade where wealthy Greek merchants lived.

It was famous for its royal palace and temple, as many cities of our own land are noted for their stately mansions and imposing cathedrals. The region consists of scattered groups of mountains with fertile plains between. The lower slopes of the hills are covered with fruit trees of almost every kind, including the fig, mulberry, orange, apricot, and the pomegranate. The well-watered plains and valleys produce rich crops of grain, and on the hills large flocks of sheep and goats found pasture.

Although the Samaritans were despised by the Jews, they were always treated with respect and forbearance by Jesus. His gentleness won their affection and gratitude. It was the one Samaritan leper, and not the nine Jews, who returned to give thanks for their cleansing. In the story of the traveller who fell among thieves, Jesus tells us that the man who showed mercy was the good Samaritan, so that the name despised by the Jews was ennobled by Jesus, and has stood ever since for human kindness. Our Lord also talked one day with a Samaritan woman who came to draw water from Jacob's well, where our Saviour was resting.

In the valley between the two mountains of Ebal and Gerizim lies the town of Shechem, which to-day is known by the name of Nablus. Here the oldest copy of the first five books of the Bible, called the Pentateuch, is still kept. It is very valuable on

account of its great age, and is guarded with as much care as the precious manuscripts in the British Museum.

The plain of Dothan divides the hills of Samaria, and runs north-east from the plain of Sharon into another low lying stretch of country. This is called the great plain of Esdraelon. It is the highway between the East and the West, and the scene of some of the great battles of history. To the north of Samaria rise the mountains of Naphtali. These, with the plain beyond, formed the province of Galilee. Beyond this range was Nazareth, where Joseph and Mary had been living before Augustus Cæsar, the Emperor of Rome, issued his decree that all the inhabitants should be enrolled. We should call it taking a census ; this is usually done in our country every ten years.

Nazareth is far away from Bethlehem ; but in accordance with Jewish custom, ' for the Jews went every one into his own city,' Joseph and Mary had to go to the city of David, for they were of the ' house and lineage of David.'

Cana of Galilee, where Jesus turned the water into wine at the wedding feast, was a few miles to the north-east. On the coast of Galilee, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, was Mount Carmel, forming the southern point of the bay of Acre. It was to the harbour in this bay that the traffic from Phœnicia came, and in later centuries, the Crusaders, led by Richard I., of England, known as Richard of the Lion-heart because of his great courage. It is interesting to know that Napoleon also visited Acre. If you look at your map you will see that Galilee extended for about fifty miles from north to south, with a breadth varying from twenty-five to thirty-five miles across. It was for the most part a pastoral

land, well supplied with water from Lebanon, and very fertile.

In the towns Arabs, Greeks, and Roman officials were all to be found. Galilee was by far the richest of the three divisions of Palestine. This, then, was the country to which Jesus came, a land about the size of Wales, a small obscure province of the great Roman Empire. But by His perfect life, His wonderful ministry, His death, He has made it to a great multitude the most sacred land on earth.

Many things helped to stimulate His imagination as He grew in wisdom during the years spent at Nazareth. The trade of the country, the beauty of nature, the wars in which Rome was constantly engaged, also the mingling of Jew and Greek, and the sight of Roman soldiers on the march, all played their part.

In the same Galilean hills there had grown to manhood many of the heroes and prophets of whom Jesus read as a boy in the Jewish Scriptures. The public ministry of Jesus centres chiefly round the shores of the Galilean lake. This small inland sea, which looks so calm and peaceful under a blue sky, is often swept by unexpected storms; then its usually still waters are whipped into angry waves. It is surrounded by steep hills which fall from as high as 4000 feet above the sea in the north, to 680 feet below at the lake of Gennesaret. After a long spell of heat, the cool air from the hills rushes down the valley to the lake and lashes the water into fury. The fishermen, if caught in one of these sudden storms, have hard work to get safely to shore in their small boats. In our Lord's day the western side of the lake was almost one long row of towns and villages, among them being Capernaum, where Jesus later made His home. All are now ruins, except the

small fishing village of Tiberias. Jesus chose all His disciples except one from the Galileans. They were His closest friends and chosen companions, and in return for His love, forsook all and followed Him.

One of the saddest things in connection with the Holy Land is that for hundreds of years it was under the cruel rule of the Turk. Dr. Horton, of Hampstead, who visited Palestine before the Great War, tells us that during his stay he looked out one night into the purple sky and saw the crescent moon with the planet Jupiter within the crescent, then above the town he saw a flag with the Crescent and the Star, which is the symbol of the Turk. 'It struck me,' he says, 'with unutterable horror, that the Star and Crescent ruled the town where Jesus passed His youth.' In the old days the Turks, who are Moslems, and bitterly anti-Christian, had no respect for what to us are the most sacred spots on earth. They would drive their sheep, goats, horses, and even camels into the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem. They had no reverence for the sacred building, and the marks round the beautiful pillars of the nave, to which animals were tied, may still be seen. The ugly stone screen, erected by the priests to prevent cattle straying into the most sacred parts of the edifice, has been removed by the British authorities. If you had visited it before the War, you would have seen unwashed windows, empty chains, originally intended to carry lamps, dangling from the roof, walls in bad repair, and other marks of neglect. This was because the priests of the rival sects—Latins, Greeks, Armenians, Copts, &c.—could not agree.

The Turks did all they could to encourage these rivalries. They did not believe in Jesus as the Son of God, and boasted that it needed a battalion of a

thousand soldiers to maintain order at Bethlehem during the Christmas festivities. Happily, since Palestine was captured by the British, under General Allenby, during the Great War, a better feeling prevails. Peace and goodwill reign, owing to the new and better conditions. No soldiers are now sent to Bethlehem at Christmas, a small local police force being found sufficient to keep order. We rejoice that the land so sacred to all Christians will never again be devastated by the misrule of the Turks, and confidently hope that Galilee, where our Saviour spent His boyhood, will again become the smiling and peaceful land that He knew.

The old Crusaders, who long ago gave their lives to redeem the Holy Land, sacrificed everything to deliver the sacred soil from the Turks. We are glad to know that the victory denied to them has at last been won by the courage and endurance of the Crusaders led by General Allenby.

At school your teacher probably talks about politics when giving you a history lesson. Jesus was greatly interested both in the politics and religion of His day. We read that when He was a boy He talked with the doctors in the Temple about difficult questions, with so much skill that they were greatly surprised. There have been religious teachers, and religious movements, whose story could be told without saying a word about politics, but it is not the case with Jesus. At His birth, the wicked king Herod attempted to kill Him, and the political authorities were largely responsible for His death. He came into direct contact with the Government of His time in many ways, so that it is impossible intelligently to understand His life without some knowledge of the politics of His time and nation.

In the days of David and Solomon, Israel formed

one nation, but after a brief period of unity, they split up into two kingdoms, with Jerusalem and Samaria as capitals. After passing through many troubles, the kingdom of Israel—that is the Northern Kingdom—gradually ceased to exist, owing to its inhabitants being led into captivity. One hundred and fifty years after, the same fate befell the people of Judah. It is not difficult to imagine the distress of the boys and girls, as they were led captive by the conquerors of their land, casting a last sad look towards the Judean hills, where for generations their fathers had kept watch over their flocks.

As far as Israel was concerned, its existence came to an end. The ten tribes were scattered among the populations of the East, to which they were carried away. But the kingdom of Judah was to be used by God to fulfil the Divine purpose. Its continued existence was of the greatest importance to the history of the world. Therefore, in a very wonderful and mysterious way, the people were restored at the end of seventy years. The exiles were allowed to return to their native land through the kindness of Cyrus, a Persian conqueror, who had just made himself master of Babylon, where the Jews were in captivity. Many of the captives had died during their long banishment; those who returned only amounted to about the present population of Oxford.

For a long time the survivors were in constant danger of being overwhelmed by the unfriendly peoples who lived in the surrounding countries. But they were brave men, and under their gallant leaders, Ezra and Nehemiah, they rebuilt the Temple and walls of Jerusalem, thus forming a national home where the children of their people could gather. Their exile had taught them how to endure hardship. For two hundred years they remained under

the protection of the great Persian kings, who defended them from the hands of their enemies.

The next great event that happened to these unfortunate people, who had already suffered so much, was their conquest by Alexander the Great, one of the most famous soldiers of history. He was perhaps the greatest military genius of the ancient world, and under his leadership the armies of Macedonia, and their Greek allies, passed victoriously through the whole of Western Asia.

This great conqueror entered Jerusalem, and he is reported to have treated the Temple and the priests with the greatest respect. At his death the Empire was divided among his generals. Palestine was allotted to the one whose headquarters were in Egypt, but the other General, whose headquarters were in Syria, also claimed it.

In many ways the Greek rule was of great benefit to Palestine. Their language was introduced, and began to be spoken, together with the native tongues.

The Gospel was thus able to enter all countries by means of the universal language. Greek culture flourished, and a number of cities inside Palestine were inhabited chiefly by Greeks, with all the advantages of Greek civilization. But while the country benefited in many ways, it also suffered severely at the hands of its conquerors. The crowning insult was the erection of an altar to Jupiter in the Holy of Holies. Not content with thus putting an end to the public worship of the true God, sacrifices were offered to their pagan god on the very spot most sacred to the Jews.

This persecution at one time looked as if it would sweep away all remaining traces of true religion. But good came out of evil, and there resulted one of

the most glorious chapters in the history of the people of God.

One day a Maccabean priest who had been commanded to offer heathen sacrifice on pain of death, refused, slew the Greek officer who gave the order, and tore down the altar. This brave deed set the whole country alight with the flames of religious war, and the priest had five sons who led the revolt of the people against their oppressors.

These five sons of the aged priest were the noble Maccabees, one of whom, Judas Maccabeus, is remembered to the present day. His exploits have been set to music by Handel. The sons fell one by one in the course of the struggle, but not before they had delivered their country from its oppressors, and were even able to restore the ancient throne. Their patriotism will always be remembered, and fathers will tell their sons how these Maccabees rose up in revolt against the foreign yoke.

At the close of a hundred years of Maccabean rule, another wave of conquest swept over the land just at a time when it appeared the people were about to enjoy a respite from their sufferings. In the year 63 B.C. the Romans, led by Pompey, appeared before Jerusalem, and after a fierce battle, captured the city. The Roman Emperor did not show the reverence and respect for sacred things that Alexander the Great had done. He entered the city with the ruthlessness of a Roman, and marched straight into the Holy of Holies. It is not difficult to imagine the fierce resentment of the Jews at this act of desecration.

But the Roman rule failed in Palestine, and that for several reasons. For one thing, their agents were constantly cutting across the customs and prejudices of the people, which they made no attempt to

consider. It was the weakness of the Roman governors which, more than anything else, brought about the downfall of Imperial Rome.

Their policy is best illustrated in the character of Pontius Pilate. He knew Jesus was innocent, but had to yield to the clamour of the mob when they threatened him. He knew his misgovernment would not bear the light of an official inquiry. A very short time afterwards he was recalled in disgrace by the Emperor, and sent into perpetual banishment.

Those who succeeded him in the government of the Jews drove the people to desperation. In the end they rose in revolt, and inflicted upon their Roman masters a heavy defeat. The task of avenging this humiliation was entrusted to Vespasian, who utterly defeated the Jewish general, Josephus, and swept on towards Jerusalem.

The city was surrounded by the Roman Army, and there followed one of the greatest tragedies ever recorded in history. The Jews fought bravely, but after the horrors of a long siege, the city fell. It was completely destroyed. The Temple perished, and not one stone was left upon another. More than a million died or were slain in the siege, and the massacre which followed. Tens of thousands were sold into slavery, and thus the people of God, driven from their ancient home, were scattered over the face of the earth.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FIRST CHRISTMAS MORNING

Wrapped in His swaddling bands,  
And in His manger laid,  
The hope and glory of all lands  
Is come to the world's aid :  
No peaceful home upon His cradle smil'd,  
Guests rudely went and came, where slept the royal Child.  
*The Angel Song—JOHN KEEBLE.*

Now let us visit in imagination the village of Nazareth, and think about the events that led up to the birth of Jesus. Here, in the centre of the village, is a carpenter's shop, where Joseph worked at his bench.

Day by day he could be seen busy with his tools, making ploughs for the farmers, and toys for the village children. He was a good and honest workman.

Joseph was betrothed to Mary, a maiden of the same village, who, though of humble parentage, had royal blood in her veins. She was constantly in his thoughts as he worked, sawing and planing wood at the carpenter's bench. He dreamed of the time when he would be able to offer her a home, and they would live happily together.

Mary was a gracious and beautiful maiden. We can picture her in her village home spinning and bread-making, ready at all times to help her mother Anna. In the cool of the evening, when the work of the day was over, she went to the well like the other village girls, in order to draw water.

Though Joseph and Mary, no doubt, often talked about their future, and of the life they hoped to

live together, other and higher things also occupied their minds. They earnestly loved God as well as one another, and desired to honour Him and fulfil His purpose in their lives. It was this that made them supremely happy, and we may be sure they often discussed the promised Messiah, as all devout Jews were doing at this time.

We can imagine them walking together in the groves of fig and olive trees on the outskirts of Nazareth, conversing about the long-expected Deliverer. Then suddenly into the quiet uneventful life of Joseph and Mary there came a tremendous experience.

One day, or perhaps when she was praying in the stillness of the night, Mary was startled by the appearance of an angel, the angel Gabriel. His message filled her with a great wonder and a great joy. From henceforth she was to be 'highly favoured,' 'blessed among women.'

The actual words spoken by the angel are recorded by St. Luke. They are these: 'Fear not, Mary, thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive and bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest . . . and of His kingdom there shall be no end.' And Mary answered, filled with the wonder of a deep surprise: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.'

It is a scene that great artists have loved to paint—the 'Angel of the Annunciation' presenting the virgin Mary with a branch of white lilies as an emblem of her beauty and purity.

It was an experience so overwhelming that she longed to talk about it with some trusted friend. Then she remembered that in the hill country of Judæa there lived Elisabeth, the wife of a country

priest, who was her cousin. You will remember that Elisabeth had a famous son called John the Baptist. To her Mary hurried with the great news. The two cousins met, and each told her strange story. We can imagine how they lingered over every detail, and discussed their wonderful experiences, and still more wonderful hopes, again and again in that quiet little house hidden away among the hills of Hebron.

Then the time came for Mary to return to her old home in Nazareth, hiding in her heart the great secret.

We have seen in the previous chapter that when Jesus was born, Augustus was on the throne of the Roman Empire. St. Luke tells us that he had ordered a census to be taken that it might be known how many people were living under his rule. This applied to Palestine as well as other parts of the Empire. Among those who were affected by this decree were Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, and Mary, his espoused wife.

In order to inscribe their names in the proper register, they had to travel all the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the Jewish custom being for each family to be counted according to its tribe or family. Joseph and Mary, although peasants, had royal blood in their veins. They belonged to the house of David, and so, in accordance with the Jewish custom, they had to take the long, tiring journey of nearly one hundred miles to Bethlehem.

Day by day they toiled on their weary way, until at last they climbed the hill that led to the city of David. They were exhausted by the journey, so we can imagine their dismay when they found that the inn was crowded with travellers for the census. Every room was occupied. The only place where they could obtain rest and shelter was the stable of

the inn. And there, among the oxen and asses, Jesus was born. The only cradle in which Mary could lay her baby was the manger, among the straw where the cattle ate their food.

Try to picture the scene. A roadside inn crowded with travellers, one part raised a foot or two above the ground, and divided into separate compartments. There the first comers had spread their beds and were already resting. The lower space was filled with oxen, horses, camels, and asses ; a place no one would care to enter unless really obliged. Into this rude stable had come the two tired travellers from Nazareth, and there, in a corner from which the beasts had been driven, ‘ Mary brought forth her Son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes,’ and laid Him in the manger. The words we sing in Luther’s Christmas carol are literally true—

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head ;  
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

How different is all this from what one would have expected ! Here at last was the real Sovereign of the world, yet none of those travellers at the inn were aware of the fact. ‘ He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.’ There He was, the Eternal Son of God, who until now had been hidden from mortal eye, ‘ *in* the world, and the world knew Him not.’

We are told that even in those far off days, whatever happened in any corner of the Roman world, was soon known to every part of the Empire. News was carried from city to city by swift runners. The rising of a dependent tribe, the discovery of some strange beast or bird, every scrap of gossip found its way to Rome.

But the coming of the Son of God was not even noticed. The Jews, His own people, 'received Him not.' Beyond registering His birth, and taking account of Him as one to be taxed, the Roman world completely ignored His appearance. The Emperor Augustus little imagined that a King had been born whose name would continue as long as the sun, and whose Empire would extend from sea to sea.

That is one side of the picture. There is another. If earth was not interested in the Great Arrival, Heaven was. As we pass from the litter and darkness of the stable out into the still starry night, we can see that though His coming was ignored by men, the angels of heaven are rejoicing with a great joy as they celebrate His birthday. That night on the pasture lands round Bethlehem, a few unknown shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks. The hours went very slowly, and to help pass the time they amused themselves with playing the flute and singing country songs. Suddenly, one of them noticed a strange light in the sky. The light grew brighter and brighter, until even the brilliant Syrian stars were lost in its splendour. Then from out the heavens there came a burst of unearthly music, and suddenly an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. Dazed by the brightness and wonder of the scene, they were seized with a great fear. But their fears were soon put to flight by the message of the angel, 'Be not afraid: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people, for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' He gave them a sign by which they might recognize the Saviour. 'Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.'

Then, as though the gates of Heaven had opened, the sky was filled with a multitude of the heavenly host, and the Judean hills echoed to the music of a heavenly song :

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

As suddenly as it appeared the vision faded, the angel song ceased, and the shepherds hastened over the fields to Bethlehem. There they found the two tired travellers from Nazareth, Joseph and Mary, the mother of Jesus, with the newborn child asleep in the manger. And so to those who had eyes to see and a heart to understand, the coming of Jesus was attended by great joy both in heaven and on earth.

It was heralded by the songs which we still repeat in our Christmas carols. All who recognized the Holy Child broke into song. The angels who were His escort from His heavenly home ; Elisabeth, as she did honour to her cousin, the mother of her Lord ; Zacharias, the aged priest of the temple ; Simeon, who, when the Child Jesus was placed in his arms, declared that he was ready to depart in peace ; Anna ; and above all, Mary, on whom had been conferred the honour of being the mother of the Saviour of the world. From that first Christmas Day to the very last, the birth of Jesus has always been associated with a great outburst of song, for men know that in Him is the

Joy of heaven to earth come down.

The old legend tells us that the shepherds brought their offerings—what little they possessed—to the mother and her Child. They are said to have presented them with gifts of milk and cheese, and wool, also one of the lambs from their flock. And as they looked, they told their story to the people, who

were greatly surprised that so many shepherds should leave their flocks to see a newborn baby boy. We are told that ' Mary kept all these sayings and pondered them in her heart.' And the shepherds returned, ' glorifying and praising God for all the things which they had heard and seen as it was told unto them.'

It was not only the poor and humble shepherds who came to pay homage to the Child Jesus. In the city arms of Cologne there are three crowns, and in the great Cathedral, in the famous ' Shrine of the Magi,' which is said to be worth £350,000, are preserved, according to tradition, the relics of the ' Wise Men ' or Kings, as some suppose them to be, who came from the distant East to lay their costly gifts at the feet of the Babe of Bethlehem. In their hearts, too, they were expecting a coming Deliverer. They took it in turns to watch for the appearing of the star, ' the rising of which out of Jacob ' had been prophesied by Balaam.

One day there appeared a caravan in Jerusalem, with the wise men at the head of it, eagerly asking, ' Where is He that is born King of the Jews ? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him.' The inquiry struck terror into the heart of Herod, who feared that his throne was threatened by this rival king. He hastily summoned a council of the chief priests and scribes, and ' demanded of them where Christ should be born.' They replied, ' in Bethlehem of Judæa,' and quoted the ancient prophecy foretelling the place of Christ's birth. Then Herod sent for the wise men and earnestly inquired of them what time the star appeared. He answered their questions as the council had answered his ; told them that the ' King of the Jews,' whose star guided them from the East to Jerusalem, had been born in Bethlehem. ' Go,' he said, ' and search



The Wise Men Guided by the Star.

diligently for the young child ; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also.'

The real purpose of Herod was not to worship, but to destroy the Child, so God warned the wise men in a dream not to return to him.

The Magi therefore started on the last six miles of their journey from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, and, ' lo, the star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.' Their long search was at an end.

Here, not in a palace, as they no doubt expected, but in His lowly lodging, was the King to whom they had come to show their reverence. When they saw the Child with Mary, His mother, they ' fell down, and worshipped Him : and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts ; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.'

From the eastern mountains  
Pressing on they come,  
Wise men in their wisdom,  
To His humble home,  
Stirred by deep devotion,  
Hasting from afar,  
Ever journeying onward,  
Guided by a star.

The ancients believed that the stars influenced history, and these Magi, or 'astrologers,' were persuaded that this star indicated the birth of a mighty King, the long expected Messiah. There had been many rumours concerning Israel's Deliverer, who was expected at any moment, so that the Roman officials in Jerusalem were greatly 'troubled' when they heard the news. They were afraid that this 'King of the Jews' would lead a revolt against their conquerors and drive the Romans out of Palestine.

There is a picturesque legend that a fourth wise

man named Abdul set out to join the other three seekers after they had started. In a lonely part of the desert he heard the cry of a child. Turning aside he found in a wretched hovel some Bedouins suffering from plague, and in need of bread. To save the family from starvation he gave them his own food, and nursed them until their health was restored. Instead of being grateful, they stole his horse, and left Abdul to die of their disease in the filthy tent. Then there came to the lonely man a vision of Him who gave His life upon the Cross to save us from our sins. Abdul saw the marks of the nails in His hands and feet, and was told the story of the great sacrifice by Christ Himself. Thus, without the star and the manger, he found Jesus.

For centuries it was the custom of the British Sovereigns to go in state to make a personal offering of gold, frankincense, and myrrh at the altar of the Chapel Royal in St. James' Palace. These were known as the King's Epiphany gifts, the word 'Epiphany' meaning the manifestation of Christ to the Magi. They were the centre of an elaborate ceremonial. The old custom was discontinued in the last years of the reign of George II., but it has now been revived. The symbols, in a box ornamented with a spangled star, are presented by two officers of the Royal Household. It is good to think that after the lapse of so many years the practice has been restored.

It is a remarkable fact that the only Evangelist to refer to the wise men is St. Matthew; whether because the Gospel was specially intended for the Jews can only be surmised.

The visit of the Magi is supposed to have taken place five days after the Circumcision, a rite which to the Jews symbolized religious separation. The

brief account given by Matthew has been supplemented by many beautiful legends whose charm is not lessened by the fact that they probably only contain a grain of truth.

Before the arrival of the wise men the Holy Family is said to have removed to a larger cave known as the Milk Grotto. This is still pointed out, and may be seen by any who visit Bethlehem. A great variety of different herbs grew round about it, and the memory of the Holy Mother and her Child has been enshrined in the names of well-known flowers.

St. Matthew does not say how many wise men there were, but the usually accepted number is three. The title of Magi is supposed to mean learned and holy to the Lord. The former meaning would explain why they were described as 'the wise men.' The caste to which they belonged was one of the most sacred in the East, and was regarded with very deep reverence and respect. They were custodians of the sacred lore, and many mysterious powers, such as foretelling future events, healing the sick, were ascribed to them. They consequently held high rank in the country in which they lived.

What that country was has never been definitely determined. We only know it was in the East, probably Arabia, Chaldea, or Persia. According to some legends the Magi were kings; but this again is an open question. Though they worshipped and studied the stars, they are also said to have believed in the one true God.

They shared the custody of an old and treasured manuscript, which predicted the coming of a Saviour who would redeem both Jews and Gentiles, so that the appearance of the star did not cause them much surprise. They had been regularly studying and

observing the heavens, as their ancestors had done before them.

According to an old tradition the names of the wise men were Theokeno, Mensor, and Sair. They are more generally known by their nicknames, Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar, these being given them to indicate their character. The first signified loving eagerness, the second the monarch of light and unswerving devotion, and the third, which was the Chaldean form of Daniel, patient submission to the will of God. The old legend says that all three of them were together in a tower studying the heavens when the star appeared. It was unusually brilliant, and a voice was heard, saying, ' Go ye to Judaea, and worship the newborn King.'

After collecting suitable gifts, they started on their journey with the least possible delay, a great joy filling their hearts. It is quite probable that they had a number of attendants, as they were wealthy and of high rank.

Guided by the star, they at last reached Bethlehem. We can imagine that, as they worshipped the Child Christ, the absence of wealth or anything to denote that the helpless babe was the King whom they sought must have strangely impressed them. Instead of a palace, guarded by soldiers, they saw a humble shelter cut out of the rock. There was no king sitting on a throne with a glittering crown adorning his brow. Instead, they beheld Mary and her helpless Child. But the shepherds and wise men were alike in this respect : they believed and they worshipped. It was a wonderful scene, and the adoration of the Magi has always been a favourite subject with artists. In the Birmingham Art Gallery is the beautiful picture by Burne-Jones, ' The Star of Bethlehem.' Mary, with the Child on her lap, is under a rude, thatched

roof. Before her, clad in royal robes, are the three kings. They are placing their golden crowns at His feet before they offer Him their costly gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. In the background stands Joseph, looking on in wonder, and on the right of the simple shelter is a radiant angel, whose wings are shining in the light that streams from the star. It is said that when Burne-Jones was painting this picture he was asked whether he believed the story to be true. He replied, 'it is too beautiful not to be true.'

The wise men probably worshipped in silence for a few moments before they presented their gifts. Theokeno then offered gold, the symbol of royalty and unselfish joy in the happiness of others ; Mensor, frankincense, emblematic of the Godhead ; Sair, myrrh (which was used for embalming), foreshadowing the Crucifixion. Legend says that in return for these gifts the Holy Child bestowed, with a touch from His little hand, on Theokeno the love that never fails, however much it may be tested, on Mensor the faith that makes all things possible, and on Sair spiritual understanding or insight into truth. According to tradition the attendants of the Magi were also allowed to offer Jesus their homage.

We are not told anything more about them in the Gospel narrative, except that King Herod was very angry when he found he had been mocked. We can, however, imagine that on their homeward journey, each led, according to an old legend, by an angel child, they talked earnestly about the wonderful experience through which they had just passed. Tradition has woven many other stories round the rest of their lives to supply the lack of information. The Virgin Mary is credited with having given them careful instructions to avoid speaking of Jesus as a king in the land of Israel. She is further said to have

given them permission to tell all they knew when they had returned to their native country, bidding them, 'let Persia rejoice at the news of the birth of the Redeemer and Assyria tremble at His name,' further adding that a messenger should be sent to tell them all the glad tidings after Jesus had returned to the Father's home.

Others have said that the Magi returned by sea to the East. A particularly beautiful legend is that Christ Himself visited Theokeno and Mensor just before His death, and heard from them that Sair had died in the joyful hope of meeting Him in Heaven. Theokeno was then very old and feeble, and according to the story, Jesus was very kind and gentle, leading him to a temple which had been built in honour of the first appearance of the guiding star. He also affirmed the promise made by Mary that a teacher should be sent after His death to proclaim the Gospel in their land. Mensor was much distressed when the time came for Jesus to leave, and is said to have wept bitterly, just as Peter did after he denied our Lord. The 'wise man' issued an order that all those who did not obey the precepts of Jesus should be banished; but His teaching was so eagerly welcomed that the penalty had never to be inflicted. In later years St. Thomas is said to have visited the country of the Magi and baptized Mensor, the only survivor of the three kings. The 'wise man' was naturally grieved that Theokeno and Sair should have died before the saint came; but Thomas comforted him with the assurance that they had received the spiritual baptism of faith.

The story of the three noble strangers who came from an unknown country to render homage to the Child Jesus, and, their mission fulfilled, disappeared with mysterious suddenness, has fascinated every

generation. The three great stars in the belt of the constellation Orion are called the Three Kings, and their crowns occur in the coat of arms of the University of Oxford.

Such is the beautiful story of the Wise Men, and of their gifts to the Holy Child.

What shall I give Him,  
Poor as I am ?  
If I were a shepherd  
I would bring a lamb.  
If I were a wise man  
I would do my part,  
Yet what can I give him ?  
Give my heart.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS AND THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Through the desert wild and dreary,  
Following tracks explored by few,  
Sad at heart and worn and weary  
We our toilsome march pursue.

Israel's homes lie far behind us  
Yet we pause not to look back,  
Lest the keen pursuer find us  
Lest grim murder scent our track.

JOHN MOULTRIE.

THE Roman rule in Palestine was similar to that of the British in India before the Great War. You have heard in your history lessons that India was governed partly by British officials and partly by native princes, who owned allegiance to the King-Emperor. In the same way, Palestine was governed partly by Roman officials and partly by native princes, who acknowledged the supremacy of the Roman Emperor.

As we have already seen at the time of the birth of Jesus, Herod the Great was the ruling prince. He was the first and last king to reign over the whole of Judæa, and his kingdom was as large as the Jewish State had been in the palmy days of David and Solomon.

Herod was neither a Hebrew, nor a Greek, nor a Roman, but an Idumean, a descendant of the hated Esau. His name will always be associated with the massacre of the children of Bethlehem, though this was but one of his many crimes.

He smarted all his life under the sense that he was not of royal origin. To try to make people forget this, he married Mariamne, a Maccabæan princess of great beauty, whom he later ordered to be strangled on the strength of a groundless suspicion. He also commanded two of his sons to be murdered. Only five days before his death he was responsible for the execution of a third son. On his return from Callirhoe, the wretched king, realizing that his life was nearly at an end, summoned a number of the noblest in the land of Israel to Jericho, and ordered them to be shut up in the Hippodrome. He knew his own death would cause no sorrow, so he resolved that the people should weep for themselves. To secure this, he secretly instructed his sister, Salome, that the leading men of the Jews imprisoned in the Hippodrome should be murdered at the moment of his death. Fortunately, the order was never carried out.

He sought to win the favour of the Greeks and Jews in many ways, and was so far successful with the Greeks that they erected his statue in Athens. The Jews regarded him with hatred and suspicion to the end, although he rebuilt the Temple of Jerusalem, and did much to restore the former glories of the country.

His closing days were haunted by the fear of a rival king, and we can therefore well understand how the news brought by the Wise Men, that a King of the Jews had been actually born as foretold by the prophet, would strike alarm into his heart. Terrified by what the Magi had told him, he resolved to act at once. The King of the Jews was born in Bethlehem. Then he would send his soldiers, and make his throne secure by killing every male child of two years old or under. Thus the hands of the wicked king were once more stained with blood. The

number of the victims is not known, nor the way in which the cruel deed was performed.

According to one story, Herod invited the mothers of Bethlehem, with their children, to an entertainment in his palace, and took special precautions that none should leave before this crowning act of wickedness was accomplished. The prophecy of Jeremy was thus fulfilled, 'In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.'

Not long after, in the luxurious palace which he had built for himself, under the palms of Jericho, Herod died, shortly before the Passover, after a reign of thirty-seven years. He was buried with great pomp and military ceremonial in the Castle of Herodium, close to Bethlehem.

As he had foreseen, the day of his death was observed as a national festival, and the release of the Jews imprisoned in the Hippodrome at Jericho the occasion for great rejoicing. The spell of the Herodian dominion was broken, and within a century the last of his race had been swept away.

Like many another tyrant, Herod had forgotten that God chooses the weak things of this world to 'confound the mighty.' In making his plans to destroy his rival, he had left God out of his calculations. Whenever this is so, plans are bound to fail, whether they be made by ordinary people or kings and princes. This truth Herod discovered to his cost. How impossible it seemed that a helpless child could defeat the purpose of the cruel and powerful king ! Yet so it was. Herod's search for the Child Jesus was in vain.

The Wise Men were told by God in a dream, 'that they should not return to Herod,' and thus

present the king with an opportunity to carry out his wicked plan. They therefore returned to their own country another way. And just as the Magi had been warned in a dream not to tell Herod where Jesus could be found, so it was by means of a dream that Joseph also learned what he should do. The angel of the Lord appeared to him saying, 'Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.' Joseph therefore took the Holy Child and Mary, and left Bethlehem by night. They went into Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.

It seems as if Jesus came into the world in the midst of suffering, but, as was the case all through His life, joy and sorrow were strangely blended. The 'Massacre of the Innocents,' as the murder of the children of Bethlehem is usually called, was quite in accordance with the character of the cruel king. These innocent victims have been described as 'the blossom of martyrdom.' They were the first of that 'noble army of Martyrs' whose blood has been the seed of the Church all through its history.

The time of the angel's warning to Joseph is uncertain. St. Luke does not mention it, or the Flight into Egypt; while St. Matthew speaks as if the hurried departure of the Holy Family immediately succeeded that of the Wise Men.

It is part of the seeming contradiction of the life of Jesus that the angel song had scarcely died away when the soldiers of Herod went out under those same stars on their cruel errand. The joy of the Magi was followed by the weeping of the mothers of Bethlehem.

Whatever may be the true facts of the massacre, the name of Herod will always be associated with

this cruel deed. In many sacred buildings, notably Wells Cathedral and Magdalen College, Oxford, it has been the custom for centuries to ring a muffled peal of bells at Childermas, or the Festival of the Holy Innocents.

We are told very little in the Gospels concerning the flight into Egypt. Egypt has always been a land of mystery. No nation can boast of such antiquities. Its monuments are the wonder of the world, and if ever you visit the country, the massive Pyramids, the Tombs of the Kings, the ruins of ancient temples, the mysterious Sphinx, and the silent waters of the Nile will make a lasting impression. It is a country that has played a very prominent part in sacred history. Abraham sojourned there, Joseph was one of its Prime Ministers, and Moses claims it as his birthplace. It was in this country that the Child Jesus found safety and refuge from Herod.

In ancient times the Egyptians were haunted by a fear of death from which they could never escape. Their 'Books of the Dead' are amongst the oldest writings in existence, and in these strange records we see how the people of the land of the Pharaohs prepared for the journey to that country from which no traveller returns.

The marvels of the recently discovered royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings by the late Lord Carnarvon and others, containing the scarab or sacred beetle of ancient Egypt, rolls of papyrus, and wonderful jewels and ornaments which the Pharaohs hoped to take with them into the spirit world, all reveal the belief of these people in the unseen. The coming of Jesus to the land of the Sphinx was symbolic of the answer He was one day to give to the eager questions asked by the Egyptians concerning a future life.

No human escort accompanied the Holy Family in their wanderings, but Holman Hunt has used a charming tradition in his famous masterpiece, 'The Flight into Egypt,' which says that the spirits of the Holy Innocents were privileged to be the companions of Jesus. Neither Joseph nor the Blessed Virgin saw them, but only the Divine Child. Whether the story be true or not, it is none the less beautiful.

Another picturesque legend says that in the course of their wanderings the Holy Family met the penitent thief. He is represented as the chief of a band of robbers ; one of his children was a leper, who was miraculously cured by being washed in the water in which Jesus had been bathed. As the fugitives were about to resume their journey, the thief said to them, 'Remember me in the place whither ye are going.' This they promised to do, Mary adding the prophecy, 'The Lord God will receive thee on His right hand and forgive thee all thy sins.' These legends are very different from the simple story in the Gospels, but we must remember that tradition invariably has an element of truth in it. It supplies picturesque details, and seeks to give an answer to such questions as 'How did it happen ?' 'Who else was there ?' —asked by every child.

According to one story, after leaving Palestine the travellers are supposed to have joined a caravan journeying to the Nile Valley. The Child Jesus soon became a favourite with the other children, astonishing His playmates with His wonderful powers. He was not at all afraid of the wild beasts, and would go down to the river bank in the cool of the evening when they came to drink at the water's edge. Once when He and some of the other children had lost their way, a lion is said to have led them safely back.

At Heliopolis, the famous City of the Sun, the



The Flight into Egypt.

arrival of the Holy Child caused a great disturbance, the people being very excited and angry at the destruction of an image which they greatly revered. Some suppose it to have been in this city that the incidents recorded in the 'Gospel of the Infancy' took place. There we read it was announced, on the arrival of Jesus, by an oracle speaking through the lips of an idol, that the unknown God had come to their city.

We do not know how long the Holy Family remained in Egypt. On the death of Herod, God told Joseph in a dream to go into the land of Israel, 'for they are dead which sought the young Child's life.' But when Joseph heard that Archelaus, the son of Herod, was reigning over Judæa, he was afraid to go. He therefore turned aside with the Holy Child and Mary, his mother, into Galilee, and dwelt in the village of Nazareth, thus fulfilling the prophecy that Jesus 'should be called a Nazarene.'

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SILENT YEARS OF JESUS

So fair, so fresh, so free from taint  
Beyond all mortal skill to paint,  
So calm in growing strength serene  
The Holy Childhood must have been.

ANNA H. DRURY.

BEFORE thinking of the boyhood of Jesus in Nazareth, there is one incident connected with His early days which we must not forget. The law of the Jewish Church said that every child should be brought to the Temple forty days after its birth, and publicly presented to God. And so we read that forty days after the birth of Jesus He was brought to the Temple to be presented to the Lord.

Let us try to picture the scene. There were no Church bells to summon the people to worship as in this country. The blast of silver trumpets in the early morning woke the people of Jerusalem, and called them to the services of the Temple.

The Temple was the centre towards which the whole city hurried. You have read the pretty story of how Hannah 'vowed a vow unto the Lord' that she would give Him her baby-boy Samuel. You remember that Samuel was brought up by Eli the priest, and that his mother came to see him once a year, bringing with her a coat she had made herself.

In a large space of the Temple, and bounded by massive pillars, the worshippers gathered. On the altar burnt a fire which never went out. The whispering of the vast number of people, the lowing of

the oxen, the bleating of the sheep, made an impressive scene. Mary stood among the other women, who little thought that in her arms she held the Child Jesus, the Saviour of the World.

As she stood quietly in the Court of Women, perhaps the music of the heavenly host, with their message of peace on earth, goodwill toward men, came to her mind. It was the custom for rich women to bring a lamb and a dove, but Mary was poor and could only afford a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.

She was not allowed to go beyond the Women's Court, so Joseph passed up the stairway, through the magnificent gateway which opened into the Men's Court. A priest in splendid robes took the offering to the altar, which reached to a height of fifteen feet, and had a surface forty-eight feet square. There, together with the sacrifices of the rich were offered Mary's pair of turtle-doves or young pigeons.

Contrasted with the pomp and ceremony of the Temple service, the patient humility of the Virgin and the humbleness of her offering reminds us of the lines we sing in that favourite Christmas hymn, ' Brightest and best of the sons of the morning.'

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,  
Vainly with gifts would His favour secure ;  
Richer by far is the heart's adoration,  
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

For many years there had been living in Jerusalem a pious Jew named Simeon. He had earnestly studied the Scriptures, especially those prophecies relating to the coming of a Saviour who was to be the 'consolation of Israel.'

He believed he had received a promise from God that he would see the long-expected Messiah before he died. On the same morning as Jesus was pre-

sented in the Temple, Simeon came up to the great gate to offer his worship. In some way, God caused him to recognize the Child Jesus. Thus, Simeon knew the promise had been fulfilled. The Child in Mary's arms was none other than the Messiah. It is not difficult to imagine the joy which must have filled his heart as he took the Child in his arms, and broke out into the song of thanksgiving which we still sing in our churches.

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace : according to Thy word.

For mine eyes have seen : Thy salvation,  
Which Thou has prepared : before the face of all people ;  
To be a light to lighten the Gentiles : and to be the glory of Thy people Israel.

Nor was Simeon the only one to give thanks to God for the Child Jesus. While he was speaking we read that Anna, a prophetess of great age, who had devoted herself to a religious life, also recognized the Holy Child as the promised Messiah.

To the crowd of worshippers the Child Jesus was in no way different from the other children who were presented that morning, but Simeon and Anna had eyes to see and hearts to understand. The silence of the Gospel story concerning the boyhood and early manhood of Jesus is suggestive. To understand the Divine Child as far as we may, it is necessary to picture Nazareth, where the early part of His life was spent.

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, Nazareth is situated in Galilee. Galilee is the Hebrew word meaning 'Circle,' and the land was called originally 'Circle of the Gentiles.' It was surrounded by the heathen nations of Phoenicia, Decapolis, and Samaria. The Gentiles in Galilee dwelt apart in exclusive colonies, and their presence was bitterly resented

by the Jews, who looked upon them as foreigners. The Galileans were noted for their patriotism and religious ardour. Josephus, one of the governors of the country, described them as being 'warriors from infancy,' and said that cowardice never had hold of them.

They were always ready to risk their lives in desperate adventures for the glory of God and the liberty of Israel. The Judæans despised the Galileans, and there was a saying that, 'out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.'

Imagine a map of Palestine stretched out before you. Look north, and you will see the blue of the Mediterranean on the left, on the right are the turbulent waters of the river Jordan. The hill country of Central Palestine is divided by a broad valley running from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan. This is the valley of Jezreel. North of it is Galilee.

From about the centre of the valley can be seen the red ribbon of the road leading through Nazareth to a natural amphitheatre of hills. This is where Jesus spent His boyhood, and early manhood. It will help you to picture Jesus in the solitude of those Galilean hills if you think of your own childhood.

Some of you live in the English Lake District. You know and love the snow-clad mountains, whose summits are lost in the clouds. The beetling brows, gaunt bare slopes, the silver cascades of the rushing torrents forming the beautiful lakes are indelibly impressed upon your memory. You have watched the glow of the waters tinged by the glory of the setting sun, or seen the sunrise over the purple peaks.

As you have roamed over the vales and heights of those wild and desolate mountains, so we can imagine Jesus wandering alone over the Galilean hills. How soothing and restful He must have found the songs

of the streams, the spiritual music of the hills, and the quiet of the countryside !

The spring flowers such as lily, larkspur, dog-rose, and white anemone were messengers which spoke to His heart. It was to these same 'lilies of the field' He referred when He told people not to be anxious about their material needs, and said, 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin. Yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.'

The Jewish children of our Lord's day lived in simple homes. The furniture was scanty, with mats or carpets laid loose along the walls. In many houses the only ornament was a lamp, which hung from the centre of the room. The doves sunned themselves on the white roofs, and the branches of the vine climbed the wall.

Near the door stood the pitchers or water-jars for daily use, which the women carried on their heads down to the village well when they went to draw water in the evening.

The quiet, simple life of the Nazareth of the Gospel story is in striking contrast to the fanciful ideas of the early painters. They have represented the Virgin and her Child seated on stately thrones, upon floors of wonderful mosaic, under canopies of blue and gold. They have robed them in brilliant colours, and made their draperies splendid with purple and gold and precious stones. But the dream of the artist was not true to reality.

The children looked very gay in their bright tunics of silk or cloth, girded with a many-coloured sash, and sometimes covered with a loose outer jacket of white or blue. The ringing laughter, and the joy which lit up their faces showed how happy

they were. Try to imagine them, and you will understand how Jesus looked and played when He, too, was a child.

We are told very little in the Bible about the silent years of Jesus. The one recorded story of His youth and early manhood during the thirty years before He entered upon His ministry is when, as a Jewish boy of twelve, he went up to Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary to keep the Feast of the Passover.

The reticence of the Gospel story about this time of preparation is suggestive, and we could wish the veil of secrecy had been lifted. In the biography or life-story of any great man or woman it is the details and trivial incidents of their childhood and upbringing, such as their home, their schooldays, their friendships, about which we like to think.

It is therefore disappointing that we are not told the story of the boyhood of Jesus in the Gospels. Many questions suggest themselves to our minds.

We wonder, for instance, how Mary regarded Him during those early years. Was she conscious of His Divine mission? Did Jesus know the reason of His presence here on earth or realize that He was the Son of God? All we are told in the Scriptures is that, 'the Child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him.'

The picture that the Gospel story gives us of Mary is that of a quiet, meditative, woman, who thought much, but spoke little. We imagine her wondering how and when the prophecies about the Child Jesus would be fulfilled. He was brought up as an ordinary Jewish boy under the control of Joseph and Mary. He soon became a favourite with the children, and other people living in Nazareth, for we read that He 'increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.' Mary knew that Jesus was the

promised Messiah, but she did not understand the secret of His Divinity. Even the disciples did not realize this until the close of His earthly ministry.

Jesus had to share all our experiences, so that He might be able to help us in our difficulties, sympathize with us in our sorrows, and rejoice with us in our joys. So our Lord grew up from boyhood to manhood, living a simple, quiet life in a carpenter's cottage. But to be a pattern for you and me He lived a perfect life, and though tempted just as we are, and in a far more terrible way, never sinned.

We should expect that a king would live in a palace surrounded by wealth and luxury; but Jesus did not enjoy any social advantages. Yet, as He worked with His square and plane at the carpenter's bench, we may be sure His mind was filled with beautiful and lofty thoughts. In the same way we can rise above the level of our ordinary work by setting our affections on heavenly things. The Gospels tell us that Jesus 'grew in wisdom,' which does not mean merely cleverness, or mental ability, but a clearness of moral perception, which enabled Him always to recognize truth.

Though the Divine favour was upon Jesus, He only received these gifts of wisdom and knowledge in proportion as He was able to bear them, and ready to use them. His neighbours taunted Him, and refused to believe His message because He came of an artisan family. In a scornful voice they said, 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?' During those early years at Nazareth He ran errands for His mother, and helped Joseph by sweeping up the shavings in the shop. He played games with the other children, and attended the synagogue on the Sabbath day. The innocent joys of the child-world

were as much a part of His life as the hours spent in handling boards or helping Mary.

Many illustrations in His parables and teaching may be traced to the sights and sounds of those happy care-free days. When He compared the Kingdom of God with leaven, He thought of the days He had seen Mary mixing the flour for the weekly bread-making, and had watched the leaven working in the dough.

The sight of the Galilean farmer turning the rich brown soil suggested the parable of the Sower. Jesus loved birds as well as flowers, and a sparrow lying with broken wing on the ground grieved Him much; but He knew that not even a helpless sparrow could fall to the ground without our Heavenly Father knowing.

We must remember that Jesus had to learn the facts of His religion in the same way as other Jewish children. The first religious instruction came from His mother, Mary. That is the privilege and the responsibility of mothers. She told Him of His great mission, and of God His Father in heaven. When the shades of evening began to fall, their talk would be about high and holy things, so that from early days, Jesus came to understand the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom.

There is one beautiful prayer which Jewish mothers taught their children to repeat every night before going to bed. Just as an English child says, 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child,' so every Jewish child offered this evening prayer, 'Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit.' There can be little doubt this was the prayer that Mary taught the child Jesus. It was a petition He never forgot. As He hung upon

the Cross He remembered it, and His last words were, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.'

'It is written,' says Martin Luther, 'that there was once a pious godly bishop, who had often earnestly prayed that God would manifest to him what Jesus had done in His youth. Once the bishop had a dream to this effect. He seemed in his sleep to see a carpenter working at his trade, and beside him a little boy gathering up chips. Then came in a maiden clothed in green, who called them both to come to the meal, and set porridge before them. All this the bishop seemed to see in his dream, himself standing behind the door that he might not be perceived. Then the little boy began and said, "Why does that man stand there? Shall he not also eat with us?"' And this so frightened the bishop that he awoke.

'Let this be what it may,' adds Luther, 'a true history or a fable, I none the less believe that Christ in His childhood looked and acted like other children, yet without sin, in fashion like a man.'

The education of a Jewish child began in the home. He was surrounded by a religious atmosphere. We may be sure that Joseph and Mary were very earnest in instructing Jesus. Everything around Him spoke of religion, the weekly synagogue, the annual celebrations, such as the Harvest Festival, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of the Passover, when pilgrims from all parts of the country went up to Jerusalem. Thus Jesus found the thought of God woven into every department of life. Such influences naturally made a deep impression on His mind.

Moreover, the national history of the Jews was full of stirring incidents connected with religion.

To commemorate the cleansing and restoring of the Temple by the national hero, Judas the Maccabee, a festive illumination was held each winter in every Jewish home. The first night it was usual only to light one candle, the number being gradually increased to eight.

In early spring the Feast of Esther and of Israel's deliverance through her was celebrated with great joy by every section of the people. The rigid exclusion of leaven during the Feast of Weeks was bound to make an impression on the mind of a Jewish child. The ingathering of the harvest, and the solemn procession in which it was carried up to Jerusalem typified the dedication of the first and best to the service of God.

The Feast of the New Year was followed by the Fast of the Day of Atonement. This was observed with an impressive solemnity which would live long in the imagination of a child. Finally, the Feast of Tabernacles reminded the people of their wanderings in the wilderness.

The age of twelve was a critical time for a Jewish boy. According to tradition it was the age at which Moses left the house of Pharaoh's daughter, and the boy Samuel heard the Voice in the Temple.

Jesus had never attended a Rabbinical college, but on one memorable occasion, He was found sitting at the feet of the Rabbis or Teachers at Jerusalem. When a Jewish boy reached the age of twelve he was treated as a responsible person. Jesus, therefore, went up with Joseph and Mary to celebrate the Feast of the Passover in His twelfth year. The Feast was a family festival. There was no attempt at public worship, no service in the Temple.

In the upper chamber the head of the house gathered his family about him. When darkness had fallen, they stood round a table, and hastily ate the unleavened bread and roasted lamb in memory of their deliverance from Pharaoh. You will remember that on the night of the first Passover every first-born of the Egyptians died, but the Angel of Death passed over the houses of the Jews whose door-posts were sprinkled with the blood of lambs.

During these years Jesus had been gradually developing. The change is marked in the Gospel by the use of the word 'boy' instead of 'child.'

It is not easy to imagine His emotions when for the first time He saw the sacred city of Jerusalem. It was the dream of every Jewish boy to visit the Holy City, whose memories and associations had played such a large part in moulding his early years. The vast crowds thronging its streets, and camping on the hillsides, the solemn and imposing nature of the Feast, would fire his imagination, and make his cheeks flush with pride.

The scene in the upper room was one which would linger long in the memory. On the table was the Paschal lamb, the tasteless unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs. All present would be ready for setting out on a journey. The stillness of the Eastern night, and the dim light of the lamp gave a strange impressiveness to the scene. The youngest present asked the question, 'What mean ye by this service?' to which the oldest replied, 'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel, and delivered our houses.'

The joy of the Pilgrims as they journeyed to the

Holy City is vividly described in the Psalms of Ascent or Degrees.

I was glad when they said unto me  
Let us go unto the house of the Lord.  
Our feet are standing  
Within thy gates, O Jerusalem ;

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem :  
They shall prosper that love thee.  
Peace be within thy walls,  
And prosperity within thy palaces.

The Feast lasted a week, and as the caravans came from every part of the country to Jerusalem, the merry laughter of the boys and girls, the lilt of the flutes, the animated conversation of the travellers as they discussed the wonders of the Holy City, made the journey a memorable one.

Moreover, the festival fell in the springtime, just when the country was waking from its long winter sleep. The rolling cornfields would be dressed in living green, the vast plain covered with beautiful flowers, whose fragrance refreshed the weary and travel-stained pilgrims. The fig-trees and olive groves shaded them from the glare of the sun, and clothed the valleys with beauty.

Their cup of joy was full when they gazed, perhaps for the first time, on the gilded roof of the great Temple, as it glittered in the sun.

This was the Jerusalem of which their national hero, David, had sung, of which their fathers in exile had dreamed by the waters of Babylon, the Mount Zion, which it was the ambition of their lives to see.

The Jewish Talmud says that at festivals, such as the Feast of the Passover, it was the custom for the members of the Temple-Sanhedrin to come out upon the 'Terrace' of the Temple to teach. Probably Jesus was exploring the numerous chambers and

courts when He suddenly found Himself among the audience listening to the Doctors of the Law.

In the excitement of the moment everything was forgotten. So absorbed was He in what the great teachers of the day had to say that He gave no thought to Joseph and Mary, who had started on the return journey without Him. It was a whole day before they discovered His absence, and when their inquiries proved fruitless, they hurriedly returned to Jerusalem.

It was three days before they found Jesus, and then after a long, anxious search, they discovered Him in the Temple, 'sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions.' The teachers with their long mantles and flowing beards were amazed at the intelligence of the boy Jesus. This is especially suggestive, as He probably only took such part in the conversations as any Jewish boy of twelve years with devout aspirations would take.

To Mary's question, 'Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?' we have His first recorded words. He replied, 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business,' or, 'in my Father's house.' The words suggest that Mary had told Him of His special relation to God. The slumbering instinct of the Eternal began to awaken within Him. He realized for the first time His Divine mission. He recognized the higher claims of God.

But Jesus was still subject to Joseph and Mary. He returned to Nazareth, and for eighteen long years worked in the carpenter's shop.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

To the flood Jordan . . . on Him baptized  
Heaven opened, and in likeness of a dove  
The Spirit descended, while the Father's voice  
From Heaven pronounced Him His beloved Son.

*MILTON'S Paradise Regained.*

ONE of the most picturesque figures in the New Testament is that of John the Baptist. As you know, he was a cousin of Jesus, and the son of Elisabeth, whose husband was Zacharias, the high priest, who lived among the hills of Hebron. It was to Elisabeth that Mary hurried after the angel vision had told her she had found favour with God, and was to be 'highly favoured' and 'blessed among women.'

Although we have no complete record of the life of John the Baptist, we know he was brought up very differently from Jesus. Loving solitude from his youth, he spent his time thinking, meditating, and brooding upon the special relation he bore to God. His parents had probably told him of his great destiny. He strove by such means as penitence, fasting, and prayer, to attain perfect self-mastery.

His clothing was of a coarse fabric made of camel's hair, bound with a leathern girdle. He lived on locusts, the food of the very poorest, and wild honey.

The prophet's fearless denunciation of sin, and call to repentance rang through the land like a trumpet. He knew he was linked in some mysterious way with the Messiah. It was his mission to prepare

the way of One, the latchet of whose shoe he was ' not worthy to unloose.'

The angel had told Zacharias that the Baptist would ' go before His face in the spirit and power of Elijah.' This thought gave a tremendous seriousness to the prophet's life.

He felt himself to be the forerunner of the eagerly-awaited Deliverer, who was expected to lead the Jewish people against their oppressors. In order to prepare himself for his great work, the Baptist left the crowded haunts of men and retired into the wilderness of Judæa.

This barren desert lay to the east of Jerusalem, and stretched from the Holy City to the Dead Sea. A more desolate place could not be imagined. Earthquakes, floods, and torrents had helped to form it. The burning arid sands made almost all life impossible.

There were no towns or villages, no flowers, and only such shrubs as would grow without moisture. It was a region of death, decay, and desolation. Clouds of locusts filled the air or crawled over the bare sunbaked rocks. The chalk and limestone hills reflected the pitiless glare of the sun. No limpid streams ran down their slopes, nor was there any foliage to hide their ugliness. In the valleys, instead of running water and the soft beauty of pasture land, there were boulders and heaps of stones. Vipers basked in the sun beneath the rocks, and foxes ran from their holes in search of food. Vultures hovered in the sky above, ready to swoop down and tear out the eyes of any unfortunate traveller who had missed his way.

Yet in the surrounding country Nature was lavish with her gifts. The murmur of the breeze in the valleys, the rare beauty of the flowers, the delicate

tracery of the trees, the verdure of the Galilean highlands, the blue waters of the Mediterranean in the distance afforded a striking contrast to the desolation of the wilderness.

It was from this scene of beauty that John the Baptist turned aside to live in the desert. Here he communed with God, wrestled with, and overcame his doubts. We cannot but be drawn to this solitary figure, so fearless in his denunciation of sin, and so full of enthusiasm for his mission. His companions were the wild beasts. The Baptist spent his days and nights in prayer, fasting, and meditation.

Believing in his message with an intense conviction, he feared none. His challenging voice rang through the land. He was 'a voice in the wilderness,' the last of a long line of prophets summoning the people to repentance; calling on them to 'prepare the way of the Lord' and to 'make His paths straight.'

The last of the Old Testament prophets was Malachi. Since his death the Voice of God had been silent. There was no open vision. Israel looked in vain for the promised Messiah. There were no outstanding figures such as Moses, Elijah, or Isaiah to keep the lamp of national faith burning brightly.

The Rabbis were chiefly concerned with the exposition of the Law. Because there was nothing to help and inspire him in their lifeless teaching, the Baptist sought the solitude of the wilderness to be alone with God. The national life was at a low ebb. The people were disunited, and groaning under the oppression of the Roman rule. It was generally believed that one of the prophets would soon return to usher in the Messianic Kingdom.

When the Baptist appeared a thrill of excitement ran through the land. At such a moment his message was bound to make a deep impression. It was

one of fire, and it was his mission to announce the Master of the flames. But the fire was to consume only the false and the unreal, leaving pure gold. John called upon people to repent of their sins, so that they might be forgiven. He insisted on baptism as an outward sign of the sincerity of their repentance. A mere profession of penitence was not enough.

The preaching of the Baptist was intensely practical and searching. There was nothing vague or indefinite which people could not understand. Those who were rich in material things were commanded to share their blessings with the poor. Greedy tax-gatherers who submitted themselves for baptism were warned not to exact more than their due. He rebuked the violence of the soldiers, told them not to accuse any one without proof, and to be content with their wages.

It was all so arresting, and had in it such an accent of sincerity, that when the people of Jerusalem heard of this desert teacher they flocked to the wilderness of Judæa. They were sure he was a prophet, some of them thought he was more than a prophet, and there were actually those who thought he might be the promised Messiah.

But his own words concerning himself and his mission are quite clear. He told the people who thronged to hear him he was only a messenger. His purpose was to 'prepare the way of the Lord,' and to announce that the 'kingdom of heaven was at hand.' He never allowed them to imagine that he was the Messiah, or that the kingdom of heaven had come in him.

The answer he gave to the questions of the priests and the Levites was quite different from what they expected. Not only did he deny that he was Christ or Elijah, as some had suggested, but he said, 'In

the midst of you standeth One whom ye know not, even He that cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose.'

It was a wonderful tribute to the power of the Baptist's preaching that its fame spread to distant Galilee. The calm of that peaceful country was suddenly broken. Fishermen mending their nets by the blue waters of the Galilean lake eagerly discussed this 'voice crying in the wilderness.' Many of them left their homes to hear the message, and perhaps to be baptized.

Among the number were John, Andrew, and Simon, two brothers, and Philip from the shore of the lake of Galilee, and Nathanael from the upland village of Cana. John and Andrew not only obeyed the Baptist's call to repentance ; they also became his disciples.

Now we come to the greatest moment in the Baptist's life. In addition to those already mentioned, another Galilean came, unknown and unnoticed. He was looked upon as just one of the crowd who had flocked to hear John's message. This was Jesus. Christ's hour had come. He had left the quiet and seclusion of Nazareth to enter upon His public ministry. The silent years of preparation were over, and so Jesus came to be baptized of John in the river Jordan.

Although Jesus and John the Baptist were cousins, we are not told they had ever seen each other before. Tradition says they met during the flight into Egypt, but on this point the Gospels are silent. St. John states that the Baptist said 'I knew Him not.' As Jesus came foward the people probably noticed nothing unusual about Him. To them He was a peasant from the despised country of Galilee, who had come to hear the message of the prophet, and who desired to be baptized.

But if those around regarded our Lord as merely one of the crowd, John did not. A few minutes before he had been denouncing the proud Pharisees and Sadducees from Jerusalem in scathing terms, 'Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance.' The deep earnestness and unshakeable faith in his message, which the solitude of the wilderness had wrought in him, caused him utterly to disregard the face of man. He feared God too much to fear man.

The sins of the Priests and Levites were condemned as fiercely as those of the humble Galileans. He made no distinction between the proud Judæans and the uncouth peasants of the northern highlands. But when the Baptist saw Jesus, a wonderful change came over him. Here was One who drew forth the homage in his soul. All the other people who came to be baptized confessed their sins. Jesus had none to confess. In His presence the confidence and assurance of the Baptist melted away, just as snow melts before the morning sun.

He was filled with a great reverence and a great humility, and cried out, 'I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?' As the eyes of John rested upon Jesus, the Baptist felt that here was One greater than himself. The spotless purity, the calm and serene face, the wonderful light in the eyes, reflecting the Divine light within, told John that He who stood there was unlike any other whom the Baptist had baptized.

The reply of Jesus is as suggestive as the question of John. The latter wished to honour Him in the presence of all the people. Here was an opportunity for our Saviour to begin His ministry in circumstances of great glory by baptizing the prophet who

had just been urging the multitude to repent. Such an act would fire the imagination of the crowd, who were only waiting for a leader. But with the noble simplicity of the absolutely pure, Jesus repeated His request, and told John to perform the office. We can imagine his trembling hopes and fears as he did so.

Now the act of consecration is over. Up to this point everything had proceeded in the same way as when the other candidates were baptized. Jesus comes up out of the water. As He is praying, lo ! the heavens are suddenly opened, and the Holy Spirit descends upon Him. A voice is heard saying, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' The vision was also granted to the Baptist, for in the fourth Gospel we read that he 'saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God.' There, by the Jordan, John found the Christ who was to be 'made manifest to Israel.'

The next day, with two of his disciples, the Baptist met Jesus. Probably they were talking about the wonderful baptism. As he looked upon the face of our Saviour, lit up with a Divine radiance, there fell from his lips the first confession ever made of the Saviourhood of Jesus, 'Behold the Lamb of God.'

The words were uttered not on the impulse of the moment, but with a full realization of what they meant. He was no longer dimly conscious of the Divine Sonship of Jesus : he knew. Of John the Baptist, Jesus said, 'Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.'

## CHAPTER VI

### JESUS TEMPTED IN THE WILDERNESS

Thou who, for forty days and nights o'ermastered all the might  
Of Satan, and the fiercest pangs of famished appetite,—  
O Saviour ! leave us not alone to wrestle with our sin,  
But aid us in these holy hours of solemn discipline.

WILLIAM CROSSWELL.

IMMEDIATELY Jesus returned from Jordan, we read that He ' was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.' St. Mark uses stronger language, and says that the Spirit ' drove ' Him into the wilderness. The traditional site is the wild barren region to the west of Jericho. It was a vacant solitude where only wild beasts could survive. It is no accident that the Temptation followed the Baptism. The Holy Ghost descended upon Jesus at the Jordan. He must now go out and be tempted of the devil, as, before He can cast out devils, He must first of all win the battle against Satan.

The change in the scene is complete. Jesus withdraws from the noisy crowd who had come down to the Jordan to hear the preaching of the Baptist, to be tempted in the desolate wilderness. He had no human companions. He must win the battle alone. The only witnesses of this crisis in the life of Jesus were, as St. Mark tells us, ' the wild beasts.'

The mental suffering which Jesus endured during those forty days we can only dimly imagine. There can be little doubt He realized the purpose for which He was in the wilderness. The thoughts that passed through His mind, and the emotions that stirred in

His heart, are things concerning which it is too sacred for us to ask questions. It was an inward spiritual conflict so intense that Jesus did not feel the need of food.

We know by our own experience that when we concentrate our whole energies upon any task, or when any great joy or sorrow comes to us, we forget, for the time being, our physical needs. The mind and spirit have completely dominated the body. But when the strain is over, the natural craving for food asserts itself.

It is important, therefore, not to forget these forty days in thinking of the temptations that followed. All alone in the solitude and desolation of that barren waste Jesus met and conquered the powers of evil. The victory was achieved by simple faith in God, and the weapon which Christ used to repel the assaults of the devil was Holy Scripture.

The first temptation was a striking proof of Satan's cunning. After a fast of forty days, and the inward struggle through which He had passed, Jesus was naturally very weak. He was both human and divine. The need for food asserted itself, and we are told that Jesus 'hungered.' Just as a wounded soldier fights on during the excitement of battle without noticing his wounds, so the needs of the body are modified, and in exceptional cases superseded, during a season of crisis. There is no time to think about them, so occupied are we with the task in hand.

It is when the victory has been won, and the noise of the conflict is stilled, that the reaction comes. The sense of exultation has gone, the fires of enthusiasm have died down, our weakness makes us liable to become dispirited and discouraged. Nature demands to be satisfied, so the craving for food has to be met.

In the hour of exhaustion, therefore, Jesus won His first victory over temptation. You may ask how it was our Lord could be tempted at all, seeing He was the Son of God. But the human and divine are inseparably blended in His person in a mysterious way that we cannot understand.

Moreover, it is no sin to be tempted. The sin is when we yield. If Jesus had not shared an experience that comes to all those who love God, He could not have fellowship with us in our temptations. The subtlety of the devil is revealed very clearly in the words, 'If Thou art the Son of God.' Satan knew that Jesus had just come from being baptized in the Jordan. He therefore suggested a doubt as to the reality of the experience, and sought to shake our Lord's belief in the Voice from heaven. He did not openly deny it, but, taking advantage of the fact that Jesus was weakened by hunger, the Evil One suggested that He should prove it by turning a stone into bread. '*If Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.*'

In that way Jesus would be able to satisfy His hunger, and at the same time to prove His divinity. It should be noticed that the devil did not tempt our Lord to do anything definitely wrong, but only to exercise His miraculous power on His own behalf.

In the same way the Evil One tempts you and me to-day. He asks us to do things which at first sight may seem harmless. By fashioning himself as an angel of light he tries to stifle the voice of conscience so that we do not recognize sin. It is necessary that we should be alert and vigilant, lest Satan should find us unprepared. He knows exactly where we are weakest and most likely to fall, so he chooses that place in which to attack us. It is also true

that the more we are like Jesus, the fiercer will be our temptations.

Just as climbers have to take supplies of oxygen, owing to the difficulty of breathing in the rare atmosphere of the mountain tops, so the higher we climb spiritually, the greater will be the temptations to which we are exposed. It is only the pure who can be tainted. The reply of Jesus to the tempter was, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' Jesus repelled each attack of the devil by simple faith in God and the power of the Scriptures. It is important to remember that our Lord only had the Old Testament.

The sight of these stones, which assumed the shape of little loaves of bread, probably reminded Him of the days at Nazareth, when He watched Mary bread-making. The Word of God is still the sword of the Spirit. It is still sharper than a two-edged sword, and the greatest men and women have found it a lamp unto their feet.

You have learnt at school about Mr. Gladstone, the great Victorian statesman. He knew his Bible from cover to cover. His mind was drenched and saturated with Holy Scripture. He tells us that 'on most occasions of very sharp pressure or trial, some word of Scripture has come home to me as if borne on angel's wings.'

When, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, generally considered the most important position in the Cabinet after that of the Prime Minister, he rose to deliver his first Budget speech in the House of Commons, Mr. Gladstone silently repeated the words of the Psalm, 'O turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me: give Thy strength unto Thy servant, and help the son of Thine handmaid.'

That was the secret of Gladstone's power. Whenever he was tempted, some passage of Scripture flashed into his mind and provided the answer he needed.

The reply of Jesus, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' indicated there is something higher than the bread which perisheth. Despite the fact that when the forty days and forty nights were over 'He afterward hungered,' Jesus refused to exercise His miraculous powers to satisfy His own temporal need. These powers were a sacred trust, and He used them to heal the sick, raise the dead, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and to make the lame leap for joy. The challenge of the devil to turn stones into bread was a material one.

Jesus realized the value of bread, as He showed when He fed the five thousand, but you will remember He also said, 'I am the Bread of Life, he that cometh to Me shall never hunger.' If Christ had complied with the devil's request, many would have pretended to believe in His message so that they might benefit materially. It was not the purpose of our Lord to make things easy for His followers. The road that Jesus travelled led to the Cross.

The second temptation was as subtle as the first. When the devil found that he could not persuade Jesus to turn stones into bread, even to satisfy hunger, Satan used our Lord's faith in God as a line of attack.

He took Christ to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple. Jesus had just declared His belief in God. Here was an opportunity for Him to prove it. If you are the Son of God, said the devil, cast yourself down from the wing of this

Temple. Show that you are not afraid to put your trust in Him to the test.

And in order to strengthen the temptation the Evil One quoted Scripture :

He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee  
And in their hands they shall bear Thee up,  
Lest haply Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.

What was the reply of Jesus ? If our Lord had done as Satan suggested, He could have won the multitude by a single act of spectacular daring. If the vast crowds assembled in the courts and chambers below saw Him hurl Himself from a pinnacle of the Temple they would be bound to believe He was the Son of God. To the tempter's suggestion Christ again used the weapon of Scripture and said, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'

To have met the temptation in the way the devil suggested would have been presumption. Jesus was invited needlessly to expose Himself to danger, and in asking Him to do so, Satan was asking our Lord to tempt the providence of God.

Men love the marvellous, so Jesus was tempted to perform a miracle that would fill them with wonder and amazement. Such an act the people would regard as the sign for which they had been looking. To throw Himself down from such a height without injury was a sure way to convince the multitude.

But Jesus does not adopt such methods to win our loyalty and devotion. He requires that we should believe in Him in spite of all that His enemies may say to try to deceive us and shake our faith. Our trust in Him as the Son of God must be like an anchor that enables a ship to ride out the fiercest storm.

The temptation is a lesson to us not to tempt the providence of our Heavenly Father by presumption. You know if you put your hand in the fire it will be

burnt. In the same way we cannot expect God to protect us from the consequences of our own folly. But there are temptations which God sends to purge our characters, so that they may become like gold purified by the refiner's fire. Then He will provide a way of escape and give us strength to resist.

In the third temptation the devil took Jesus into 'an exceeding high mountain, and shewed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said unto Him, All these things will I give thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.'

This was the last despairing effort of the Evil One. The prospect from the summit we can only dimly imagine. Here, in their dazzling glory, lay 'all the kingdoms of the world,' which Jesus could have by an act of homage to the 'prince of this world.'

By acknowledging the supremacy of Satan our Lord could win the allegiance of all nations, and set up His kingdom amidst the acclamation of the multitudes. The advice of the Evil One offered an alternative to Calvary.

The cunning of the temptation was increased by the fact that the Jews were not looking for a poor, meek, despised Messiah. They expected One who should kindle the fires of patriotism, and lead them to victory against their oppressors. They imagined a mighty warrior at the head of a conquering army striking terror into the hearts of those who ruled them so harshly. This second David was expected to wreak vengeance upon those who had laid waste the land of Israel.

He would restore the palace and Temple of Solomon to a yet greater glory, and make kings tremble at the name of Israel. The brightness of the Messiah's rising was to consume her enemies; make her fields more fertile than those of other

nations, and bring in an era of material prosperity. This was what the Jews expected. But to the devil's offer of material power and temporal glory Jesus again quotes Scripture and says, 'Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'

It was not the mission of our Lord to be an earthly conqueror, or to restore the fallen kingdom of Israel, as the Jews so fondly imagined. Instead, He said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.'

Jesus taught that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us. Every time a person is won for Christ the boundary is extended. This Kingdom is founded on love and self-sacrifice. It has no army to protect it, or taxes to support it. Jesus knocks at the door of our hearts, and asks to be admitted, but does not force us to be His followers. If we let Him in He will sup with us, and we with Him.

Satan had no right to offer what was not his, but Jesus had not come to 'win the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them,' but to do the will of His Heavenly Father, which was that He should set up the Kingdom of God on earth. Days of disillusion and seeming disaster were to be the lot of His followers. But Jesus assures them that whatever ripples there may be on the surface, the river of life flows out to sea; those who love Christ will see Him face to face, when, at the call of the twilight and evening bell, they cross the bar.

When the devil had completed every temptation, we read that 'he departed from Jesus for a season.' Then follows a beautiful touch. It is as if a soft warm wind had scattered the storm-clouds, and the rays of the setting sun made the heavens a fiery crucible of red and gold.

Jesus had to conquer the Evil One alone. The battle was fought, and won, in the solitude of the desert, with only the wild beasts as witnesses. But now, in the hour of victory, God sends His angels to minister to Him. It is important to remember these spiritual beings were not sent to Him during His conflict with Satan. In the same way God sends His messengers to you and me after we have been tempted. He allows us to be tempted so that our characters may be strengthened and purified. But when we have overcome the temptation, mystic influences steal on our hearts, which mean that God is speaking to us. Jesus never compromised with the world. Himself despised and rejected of men, He taught that His followers could not serve both God and mammon, and that they would be hated by the world.

The devil still asks you and me to render him homage by being disloyal to Jesus Christ. It is not easy always to be true to the highest, but the words of Tennyson should challenge the best that is in us :

Follow the Christ, the King,  
Live pure, speak true, right wrong,  
Follow the Christ, else—  
Wherfore born ?

What are the weapons by which we can repel the tempter's assaults ? Paul tells us when he says, ' Stand therefore having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace ; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, with all prayer and supplication, praying at all seasons in the Spirit.' That is the

Christian armour which will enable us to defeat the Evil One.

Those who are inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven are lords over more real and vaster realms than anything Satan has to offer. The glory of this world has been well described as 'fairy gold that turns to dust and dross,' but the glory of the Kingdom of God lasts for ever. It is eternal. The boundaries of that Kingdom shall stretch from shore to shore; all nations shall be subject to Him.

You will remember St. Luke tells us that the devil departed from Jesus 'for a season.' In other words, he waited for another opportunity to tempt our Lord. Christ had defeated the Evil One in the wilderness by simple faith in God, and used Holy Scripture to repel the assaults of the tempter.

The temptation in suffering was just as fierce, and just as terrible as the concentrated temptation He endured after His baptism. In the terrible agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, when His sweat became, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground, Jesus prayed twice, that if it was His Heavenly Father's will, He might be spared the Cross. On the first occasion He said, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt'; and on the second, 'O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.'

Again, in that moment of unspeakable suffering on the Cross, just before He yielded up His spirit to God, pain forced from the lips of Jesus the cry, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Thus was He literally 'tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.'

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS

Of all the honours man may wear,  
Of all his titles proudly stored,  
No lowly palm this name shall bear,  
'The first to follow Christ the Lord.'

HENRY ALFORD.

THE selection by Jesus of the disciples forms an important landmark in the Gospel history. Their calling was probably the prelude to the Sermon on the Kingdom, in the founding of which they were to play such a large part.

In the earlier period of His ministry, Jesus laboured single handed, but He now called the twelve to be His chosen companions. They included a union of opposites in the persons of Simon the zealot and Matthew the publican. The former was an intense Jewish patriot, chafing under an alien yoke, and the latter a tax-gatherer, who had become a servant of the hated foreigner. But the union was designed by Jesus to be a prophecy of the future.

The twelve may be divided into three groups, with characteristics taken from the Gospels :

#### FIRST GROUP.

Simon Peter . . . . .	The disciple of rock.
Andrew . . . . .	Peter's brother.
James and	Sons of Zebedee, and sons of
John, the 'beloved disciple'	

thunder.

#### SECOND GROUP.

Philip . . . . .	The earnest inquirer.
Bartholomew, or Nathanael . . . . .	The guileless Israelite.
Thomas . . . . .	Called Didymus, that is Twin.
Matthew . . . . .	The publican (so called by himself only).

## THIRD GROUP.

James, the son of Alphaeus	James the less ( <i>Mark xv.</i> , 40).
Lebbæus, whose surname was	
Thaddæus, in St. Luke's	
Gospel	The three-named disciple.
Judas, the brother of James	
Simon	The Zealot.
Judas Iscariot	The Traitor, 'who also betrayed Him.'

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, the day after the Baptism, John the Baptist was standing with two of his disciples when he met Jesus. As he looked upon the face of Christ he was constrained to say, 'Behold the Lamb of God.'

The first three Gospels are a record of our Lord's ministry, and are chiefly concerned with facts. In every instance the scene changes straight from the Temptation to Galilee. John, however, often described as the 'beloved disciple,' cherished sweet and holy memories of his intimate association with our Lord, and explains the divine meaning and purpose of His mission.

The week after the Temptation was the most memorable in his life, so he gives us an account of what happened. After defeating the Evil One in the wilderness, Jesus returned to seek rest and refreshment by the banks of the Jordan. It was natural He should do so in order to obtain fresh reserves of strength before going 'in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.'

When the Baptist saw Jesus he immediately recognized Him, and pointed out our Lord to his companions. What happened? When 'the two disciples heard John speak, they followed Jesus.' Their names were Andrew and John—the 'beloved disciple' of Christ. You will notice that our Saviour did not call them. These simple obscure fishermen felt compelled to follow Him, although He had not

spoken a word to them. They were drawn by they knew not what to leave the Baptist and become disciples of Christ.

At first, Jesus did not know they were following Him. After walking a little way He looked round, saw them, and said, 'What seek ye?' He did not speak harshly, but merely wished to know what their object was in following Him, and if they were sincere. Probably they were confused by the question, and did not know what to say in reply. Then, when they had recovered from their surprise, they asked Jesus where He dwelt.

Our Lord read their thoughts, and invited these two former disciples of John the Baptist to 'come and see.' Joyfully, they accepted the invitation of their Master, and spent the whole of that day in His company. So vividly impressed was it upon their memory, that John even remembers the time, and tells us, 'it was about the tenth hour.'

Andrew knew he had found the Messiah, and wished to make the good news known to others. So he at once hurried to his brother, Simon Peter. Peter was disinclined to come, for we read that Andrew 'brought him to Jesus,' but Andrew did not intend to be moved from his purpose by anything he might say. No argument of Peter's could shake his belief that he 'had found the Messiah,' and, having found Him, he was determined that his brother should find Him too. May you and I have Andrew's tenacity of purpose in bringing others to Jesus.

As Christ looked upon Simon Peter, He saw in that rough, uncouth fisherman a wonderful determination and solidity which caused Him to call Peter a 'rock.' Beneath his impetuousness and fear of ridicule, which led him to deny our Lord thrice, Jesus saw hidden courage and resolution.

Our Lord still chooses His disciples from among the humble and weak. The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, who reveals His secrets to those who have the trust of a little child.

The next day Jesus was on His way to Cana to attend a wedding. He met Philip, who came from the fishing village of Bethsaida, to which Peter and Andrew also belonged. Philip, who at once accepted the invitation of Jesus to follow Him, had a close friend called Nathanael.

So away he hurried to his house, his heart swelling with affection for his new-found Master. Arriving at the place where Nathanael lived, Philip told him his great secret, expecting him to share his joy. We may therefore assume he was not a little disappointed when his friend showed no great enthusiasm, but asked if any good thing could come out of despised Nazareth. Evidently he was aware of the contempt in which the Nazarenes were held by the proud Judæans, and, judging by his answer, he was inclined to doubt the story of Philip. It was because Jesus came from Nazareth that Nathanael found it so difficult to believe.

But Philip persists. If his friend will not accept his word, he extends to him the same invitation that Jesus gave to John and Andrew. 'Come and see,' he says, 'and you will have an opportunity to prove the truth of my words for yourself. When you see my Master your doubt will be changed into certainty; you will realize that what I say is not the result of imagination.' His earnestness prevailed, and Nathanael came to seek the Christ. Soon Jesus met him and said, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.'

As our Lord looked upon Nathanael, He knew he was going to believe. He had seen him under a

fig tree, probably praying in the seclusion of his own garden, as it was the custom of the Jews to pray underneath such a tree.

The spiritual insight of Jesus surprised him, and he asked, 'Whence knowest thou me?' Then our Lord told Nathanael He had seen him under the fig tree even before Philip called him. Instantly all uncertainty was swept away, just as the morning sun dispels the mist and gloom. The light in the eyes of his Master resolved all doubts, and convinced him of the truth of his friend's words.

As Nathanael came to Him, Jesus knew he longed to live on a higher level, as he showed by his declaration of belief in our Lord as the Son of God, and the King of Israel. To this confession of faith Christ told him that one day he would see greater things. Thus, Nathanael came to be one of the twelve.

It is interesting to know all the disciples were chosen from among the Galileans except one, the exception being Judas Iscariot, who betrayed our Lord. Considering that the ministry of Jesus centred mostly round the Sea of Galilee, it is natural this should be so.

St. Luke's Gospel tells us that one day, while Jesus was preaching by the lake of Gennesaret, the multitude pressed Him so much that He entered into a boat beached on the shore. The fishermen had left it and were washing their nets. The boat belonged to Simon Peter, and our Lord asked him to put out a little from the land, so that He might escape the attentions of the crowd who had come to listen to Him. He then sat down, and taught the multitudes.

After Jesus had finished speaking, He told Peter to row further out, and let down the nets for a catch.

But Simon was discouraged and tired. After toiling all night in vain, he did not think it was worth while to try any more. Nevertheless, there was a gentle persuasion in the voice of Jesus this rough fisherman could not resist, so he let down the net.

What was the result of Peter's faith? In a short time it was so full of fish that it could not contain them. Not knowing what to do, Simon beckoned to his companions in the other boat to come and help him. We can imagine the eagerness with which they came after the disappointment of the previous night. So great was the catch it filled both the boats, which began to sink under the tremendous weight.

The sight was too much for Peter. The visible evidence of what Christ had done thawed the hardness of his heart, and overcome with emotion, he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' His pride was changed into humility. Both he and his partners were amazed at the draught of fish. Try to imagine the scene. The previous evening, Simon Peter had set sail with his partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, confidently expecting a good catch. Perhaps their boats belonged to a fishing fleet, such as the one at Brixham or other towns on the English coast. As the sun touches the sky-line, the golden shafts of light mingle with the bluish-green of the water to make a spectacle of wonderful beauty. Gradually, the shades of colour give place to the darkness of night.

The pale sheen of the moon lights up the placid waters, and with the starry vault of heaven as a canopy, we may imagine these fishermen toiling through the long weary watches of the night. Eagerly they strain at their nets to see if they have

caught anything. But the hours go by and their efforts are unrewarded.

They begin to despair, and it is possible that one of those sudden storms, common on the Sea of Galilee, springs up. Overhead, clouds race across the sky. The wind wails and moans, and as it sweeps through the mountain passes, awakens weird and fantastic echoes among the rocks and boulders of the steep hills which surround this small inland sea. A short time ago there was not a ripple to be seen on the surface, but now the waters become violently disturbed, and foam-crested waves hurl themselves against the frail craft.

The flush of dawn appears in the sky, and these tired and dejected fishermen, who set out with such high hopes, have caught nothing.

Later that day Jesus entered Peter's boat and asked him again to launch out and let down his nets for a catch. He did so, and we know the result. It is not surprising he was awed as he gazed upon the decks of the two fishing vessels, with the nets broken by the number of fish, and the boats groaning beneath their weight.

Perhaps our Lord looked at him from the stern of the ship; but whatever the reason, Simon Peter is filled with contrition. Jesus brings peace to his troubled mind with the words, 'Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.' When they had brought their boats safely to shore, Peter, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, 'forsook all and followed Jesus.'

The chief thing to be noted about the disciples is that they were humble, obscure men. Our Lord did not select His chosen companions from among the mighty ones of the earth. He saw beneath the surface to the hidden springs, and knew it was

possible for men to honour Him with their lips, yet, all the time, their hearts might not be right with God.

Jesus told the disciples to go 'to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' and to preach the Kingdom of Heaven. Power would be given them 'to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils.' They were to take no gold or silver, nor wallet for their journey, but to rely upon the hospitality of the people in the town or village where they preached.

Christ did not let them imagine it would be easy to follow Him. He told them plainly they would have to endure much suffering. They would be delivered up to councils, scourged, brought before kings and governors, because they believed in the name of Jesus. But they were not to be distressed as to what they should say, for the Holy Spirit would speak to their hearts. It was enough if they trusted in God.

If we are to be true followers of our Lord, we also must 'endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.'

## CHAPTER VIII

### JESUS, THE FRIEND OF CHILDREN

There were some among Thy hearers, Lord,  
Who knew Thine own blest spirit, and to Thee  
Brought their young children in their purity,  
Deeming aright such visits would afford  
Joy to a heart like Thine.

STEPHEN GREENLEAF BULFINCH.

JESUS loved the children. The nation to which Christ belonged was unusually fond of children, and fenced them round with the most tender care.

‘Our principal care is to educate our children,’ says Josephus, the Jewish historian, and the Jews believed the world was saved by the prayers of the little children. We love, therefore, to think of Jesus as the Friend of the little ones.

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, our Lord rejoiced in the friendship of the boys and girls during the silent years at Nazareth. Nothing gave Him greater pleasure than to see them happy, and He shared in their joy to the full.

The qualities of a child, such as trustfulness and humility, Christ said we must never lose. His teaching emphasized again and again the likeness of the child-spirit to the Kingdom of Heaven. He taught that life did not lose any of its dignity by sharing the innocent joys of childhood, but rather that they cast a halo round it.

The early years of Jesus were spent in a quiet country village. The mystic influences of the country-side appealed to His heart. The trees, and hills, and flowers spoke to Him of God. In the passing

sweetness of the wayside flower Jesus saw the shadow of the unseen world. The veil between 'things of earth and things Divine' was very thin. Even the silence contained a sound. The whisper of the wind among the trees, the pink and purple chequer of the flowers on the hillsides, the dew-lipped rose, awakened in Jesus that love of the beautiful which adorns the life of every child. It is the spirit which expresses itself in so many of His parables and runs like a vein of gold through His teaching.

Another characteristic of childhood which greatly attracted Jesus was its humility. This, He said, we must always cherish. He loved the boys and girls because they were humble. The receptiveness of a child's heart is like good soil, where the seed can germinate and bear fruit an hundredfold. The willingness of the young to receive instruction was in direct contrast to the proud attitude adopted by the Scribes and Pharisees, who delighted to make difficulties, and tried in vain to trip Jesus up in His speech. As you will remember, He denounced them in scathing language.

The deep things of God, He said, are revealed not to the wise and understanding, but to those who have the humility and trustfulness of a little child. The teaching of our Lord was so simple that the priests could not understand it. They stumbled at its simplicity. They refused to accept it without questioning, in the spirit of child-like trust, but demanded a sign, which Jesus would not give. These religious leaders wanted to prove everything by logic. They failed to see that argument can never satisfy the yearnings of the heart, and that Jesus loved the children because they trusted Him, and their thoughts were pure and beautiful.

To show any of these, the least of His brethren, as

He calls them, a kindness, is an action our Lord will not forget. To you it may seem a little thing ; but even if it be only the giving of a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus, a reward has been promised.

The importance of the impressionable years of childhood was clearly recognized by Him. He said, ‘ whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe on Me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.’

Another reason why Jesus loves children is because they are grateful. Their gratitude and appreciation are like the genial warmth of the spring sunshine which quickens in men and women the spirit of praise. When, for one reason or another, the skies are overcast, the melody of song from the heart of a little child has often dispersed the gloom.

He delighted in the ‘ Hosannas ’ of the children as He rode into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, and in ‘ the sweet ministry of song ’ their part is still truly great. Like the strains of noble music in the vast spaces of a cathedral the grateful appreciation of a boy or girl carries the soul to the gates of heaven.

The laughter of a little child has been the last sunset many a confirmed invalid has seen in this world, and the music of children’s voices has cheered many a sick room. It is said that when Robert Louis Stevenson lay sick and depressed in his room in Samoa, he asked that the children from the Mission School might come and sing to him. And when Dr. Guthrie, the great Scottish preacher, was dying, he asked those gathered round to sing him ‘ A Bairnie’s Hymn.’ His last memories were the memories of childhood, and he crossed over to the other side as his friends sang, ‘ There is a Happy Land.’

The trustfulness and humility, the simplicity and

gratitude of a child's heart are treasures of countless worth according to the teaching of our Lord. They are to human life like the musk-rose that throws 'its sweets upon the summer,' or the little speed-well of the fields, that, bestrewn so plentifully on the rough, weedy lands awaiting the plough, is the first wild flower of the year with a pure shade of blue.

These, then, are some of the reasons why Jesus loves the children and all that childhood stands for.

Now let us notice some of the incidents relating to children recorded in the Gospels.

There is the beautiful account of the ruler whose little daughter Jesus raised from the dead. Our Lord had been dining with the publicans and sinners, to which the Pharisees objected, as the disciples of John the Baptist did, and it was when Christ answered their objections that a ruler of the synagogue came and worshipped Him. His name was Jairus, and as he was called a 'ruler,' we know he held a responsible position in the Jewish Synagogue.

His little girl, whom he dearly loved, was seriously ill. We may be sure he had done all he could to restore her to health and strength, but all his efforts availed nothing. One day he went for a walk in the direction of the Sea of Galilee, probably to try to bring quiet to his troubled mind, when he noticed Jesus speaking to the multitude from a boat.

The sight of our Lord brought great joy to the heart of Jairus, who almost certainly had heard of His wonderful works, and knew that He could heal his daughter, if He would, by merely laying His hands on her. So this wealthy ruler fell at the feet of Jesus, and entreated Him to come and make his child well again. She was about twelve years of age, and the apple of her father's eye. If she died,

this ruler of the Synagogue would have nothing to live for. That was why he appealed so earnestly.

Whether Christ said anything in reply we do not know, but we do know He at once went with Jairus, followed by the multitude. While He was speaking to the woman, who had an issue of blood, a messenger came from the house of the ruler, telling him his little girl was dead, and that there was therefore no need to trouble our Lord further.

What the news meant to Jairus we can only imagine. It seemed as if his faith had been misplaced, and that Jesus was only mocking him. His daughter was allowed to die in the springtime of life just as a fragile snowdrop is wilted by the frost. The breath of death had blown on the garden of her soul before the flower of her life had had time to open. It was a cruel blow and the ruler must have been stunned by the announcement.

But Jesus completely ignored the news brought by the runner, and told Jairus to fear not, only believe. He then turned the multitude away, and did not let anybody follow Him except the three disciples who shared His inner life—Peter, James, and John.

When they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue they found everything in a state of great disturbance. As is the custom in Eastern countries, flute-players and professional mourners were present, and the large number of people who had gathered in the house were weeping and beating their breasts. The ruler, owing to his important position, had a wide circle of friends, and many of these came to offer him their sympathy in his bereavement.

As Jesus entered the dwelling and gazed on the strange scene, He said in accents of authority, 'the child is not dead, but sleepeth.' The only answer of those assembled was to laugh Him to scorn.

Despite all He had done for the common people, the chief priests and scribes of Jerusalem still refused to accept Him. Their derision, however, had no effect. With a wonderful dignity He told them to leave the house, and after they had gone, He entered the room where the little maid lay. The only others present were her parents and the three disciples.

As our Lord looked upon the form of the child lying stiff and cold in death, we may be sure the light of a great love shone in His eyes. Always the Friend of children, His heart yearned over them with an infinite tenderness. It grieved Him to see them suffer. The nature of Christ is as sensitive to any wrong done to the little ones, and to any pain they have to endure, as the lingering leaves of autumn are to the wind. He could therefore well understand the sorrow of the parents of this little girl.

But Jesus did not prolong their agony by keeping them in suspense. Approaching the side of the couch He takes the hand of the child and says to her, 'Talitha cumi,' which is, being interpreted, 'Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise.'

Imagine the joy of the parents as they saw their daughter, whom the people outside had given up for dead, rise from the bed and begin to walk. What her illness had been we are not told; perhaps, she had been within sight of recovery, only to have a relapse, and gradually become weaker till at last she died. A short time before, the house of the ruler of the synagogue had been a place of mourning. There was nothing to relieve the gloom. The coming of Jesus brought life and light.

The Gospels are content with the bare outline, but with the help of imagination we can fill in the details of the picture for ourselves. It is one of the most beautiful in the whole of the New Testament,



‘Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise !’

and illustrates very clearly what an intense love Jesus had for children. A delightfully human touch is given at the end of the narrative when we read that our Lord 'commanded something should be given her to eat.' He knew it was not enough merely to restore the maiden to life ; the physical needs must not be neglected. He therefore instructed the parents to give her food so that she might satisfy her hunger and recover her strength.

We know the father and mother were amazed at the raising of their daughter, but the conversation that passed between them and Jesus is not recorded. Joy and gratitude were expressed, and there can be little doubt the knowledge that his faith had not failed when the messenger came with the news that his daughter was dead, filled the heart of the ruler with thankfulness.

His faith had been tested, but it had survived the test. So once again the laughter of the little girl rings through the house, and her step is heard by the delighted parents. The sorrow of their hearts is followed by a harvest of joy, which is all the greater because of the tears which their eyes shed before Jesus came. After our Lord had told the parents to observe silence, He and the three disciples left the house.

Here is another scene from the Gospels. On a certain occasion the disciples asked Christ who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Instead of answering their question, Jesus called a little child and set him in the midst. Imagine the contrast between this small boy, with a ruddy glow upon his cheeks, his face lit up with a happy smile, and a merry sparkle in his eyes, and the rough uncouth disciples surging round him eager to know who was to be the greatest.

They were anxious to be exalted ; but not only did

Jesus disappoint their hopes, He pointed to the little child, and said that unless they became as little children, they could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven at all. The greatest in that Kingdom would be he who had the humility of that child.

Whoever shewed kindness to the children was shewing kindness to Jesus. They are the lambs of His flock, and each is precious in His sight. That was what He meant when He said, 'it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.' One of the most beautiful and touching incidents recorded in the Gospels is that of Christ blessing the children.

We remember His displeasure when the disciples rebuked the mothers who brought their little ones for His blessing, and how He reproved those who would have kept them from Him. The words, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God,' have been described as 'the children's charter.' It is a scene which has inspired many an artist and poet, and is the subject of one of our favourite children's hymns—

I think, when I read that sweet story of old,  
When Jesus was here among men,  
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,  
I should like to have been with Him then ;  
I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,  
That His arms had been thrown around me,  
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,  
Let the little ones come unto Me !

There is a well-known picture called 'The Hope of the World,' painted by Harold Copping, which portrays Jesus blessing the children. Seated on His knees, and gathered round Him, are boys and girls from Africa, India, China, and other countries. He is looking on them with eyes full of love and tenderness, and they are gazing into the Saviour's face

with child-like trust and adoration as He blesses them. This picture is more than an artist's dream ; it is a prophecy. There are still thousands of boys and girls who have never heard the name of Jesus, the Friend of children, but one day both you and they will see Him as the children saw Him when He was here on earth. When that time comes, children of every realm will know and love Him.

But thousands and thousands who wander and fall  
Never heard of that heavenly home ;  
I should like them to know there is room for them all,  
And that Jesus has bid them to come.  
I long for the joy of that glorious time,  
The sweetest, and brightest, and best,  
When the dear little children of every clime  
Shall crowd to His arms and be blessed.

In the twenty-first chapter of Matthew's Gospel we read there were ' children crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the son of David.'

You will remember that Jesus had been healing the lame and the blind, who came to Him in the temple ; when the chief priests and scribes saw what He did they were very indignant, and the cries of the children irritated them still more.

These children were not ' crying ' in our sense of the word. They were shouting—shouting for joy ! Jesus had just expelled the Levites, who sold doves for sacrifices, from the sacred building, and overturned the tables of the money-changers, who had converted foreign coins into the consecrated shekels of the temple. They had seen the look of compassion on the face of our Lord as He gazed on the blind and crippled beggars who haunted the gates and courts, seeking alms from those who passed by : and they had heard His words of tender pity as He healed some of these poor sufferers. They had seen men blind from birth open their wondering eyes for

the first time, and cripples, who a few moments before had been unable to walk, leaping round Jesus as if they could never thank Him enough for the strange and wonderful gifts He had conferred upon them. The temple cloisters rang with their praises and thanksgivings.

The word 'Hosanna,' as a prayer, means 'Save, we beseech Thee,' and, as an exclamation 'O ! save !' But just as we say 'God save the King,' or the French 'Vive le roi !', so the Jews came to use the word 'Hosanna' simply as an exclamation of joy and wonder and thankfulness.

The words 'Hosanna to the son of David' were a Messianic formula, or the form of words with which they hailed one whom they took to be the Messiah, the Saviour, promised by the prophets. The cry on the lips of the children was a contraction of the formula. The full form ran : 'Hosanna to the Son of David ! Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord ! Hosanna in the highest !'

The Pharisees might deny His claim, and frown on their joy. The Rabbis and rulers of the synagogue might doubt, but those children of the temple with their true instincts, their open minds, their responsive hearts, were quite sure Jesus was the Saviour whom God had promised to send. The reply of Christ to the chief priests and scribes was that out of the mouth of babes God builds a stronghold for men and women. The simplest things of life, the most common, are the best.

Just before he died, John Richard Green, the historian, wrote : 'What seems to grow fairer to me as life goes by is the love, and grace, and tenderness of it—not its wit, and cleverness, and grandeur, and knowledge, grand as knowledge is : but just the laughter of little children, and the friendship of

friends, and the cosy talk by the fireside, and the sight of flowers, and the sound of music.'

Perhaps you have heard of the boy who refused to play with his marbles lest he should wear them out ; or the selfish boy who, when his father promised him a pony, said, No, he did not want a pony because another boy would be sure to want a ride on it ; or even the rash, impatient boy, who jumped into the river to shelter from the rain. You feel at once that such boys as these have not the spirit of a little child.

We cannot take you into the temple at Jerusalem, and let you see Jesus heal the lame and the blind. But we can tell you the story of His life on earth ; we can shew you how pure He was, how good, how kind, how unselfish. He is the very Saviour who still meets all your needs, and in whom you can delight. We are sure, therefore, you will greet Him with your Hosannas, just as the children in the Temple did long ago, and the boys and girls of Jerusalem as He rode into the city on that first Palm Sunday.

In another part of St. Matthew's Gospel, Jesus said to the multitude, ' But whereunto shall I liken this generation ? It is like unto children sitting in the market-places, which call unto their fellows, and say, We piped unto you and ye did not dance ; we wailed and ye did not mourn.'

As Jesus passed through the streets and bazaars of a Galilean town, He came on a number of children playing at their games. As He taught the people, He watched the boys and girls, and shewed how closely He had noticed them by bringing them and their games into His talk. He told the crowd to observe the children, and said they were just like the youths and maidens at whom they looked.

These children were playing at weddings and

funerals. A Jewish wedding was then, as an Eastern wedding is to-day, a very gay spectacle, certain to seize the fancy of the young people. The bridegroom was arrayed in his best and brightest robes, and went in public procession to the sound of music, and with perfumes floating on the air, to escort the bride to her new home. The whole town was alive with excitement, bands of people dressed in wonderful colours continually passing to and fro in the streets.

Again, a Jewish funeral would make a deep impression on a child's mind. The dramatic features of the sad scene such as the professional mourners, who tore their hair, and beat their breasts, and raised a piercing cry or wail, could not fail to live long in the memory of children.

This was what the children, whom Jesus watched, had been doing.

## CHAPTER IX

### JESUS BY THE SEA OF GALILEE

Him evermore I behold  
Walking in Galilee.  
Through the cornfields waving gold,  
In hamlet or grassy wold,  
By the shores of the Beautiful Sea.  
He toucheth the sightless eyes ;  
Before Him the demons flee ;  
To the dead He sayeth : Arise !  
To the living : Follow Me !  
And that Voice still soundeth on  
From the centuries that are gone  
To the centuries that shall be !

H. W. LONGFELLOW.

GALILEE has been called ' the Cradle of the Gospel,' for it was here, by the side of its lake, that Jesus began His public ministry.

The Lake of Gennesaret, or Sea of Galilee, is a small inland sheet of water surrounded by steep hills. It is liable to sudden storms caused by the cool air from the hills rushing down the valley and churning up the surface.

On a fine day, the Sea presents a very beautiful sight. The land surrounding it rises in cliffs and terraces. Mount Hermon and other giants can be seen in the background, their snow-capped summits contrasting with the placid blue waters of the lake gleaming in the sunlight like a jewel. During the lifetime of Jesus, the western side of the lake was nearly one continuous line of towns and villages. The chief of these was Capernaum, where our Lord healed the servant of the centurion who was sick of the palsy, and later made His home. With the

exception of the small fishing village of Tiberias, these once thriving and prosperous towns are now all in ruins. In His day they were the centre of a busy community, many of whom earned their livelihood by fishing. Peter, James, and John, the three disciples who entered most intimately into the life of Jesus, lived by the Sea of Galilee.

The cool waters of the lake, and the calm of the hills surrounding it had a peculiar attraction for Him. His ministry centres almost entirely in the region round this inland sea, and often He sought rest and refreshment by its side. Many of the miracles were performed within sight of it ; when the multitudes thronged Him, He found refuge on its bosom, and in the evening He retired to the surrounding hills to be alone and pray all night.

The Lake of Gennesaret is associated with some of the most tender memories in our Lord's ministry.

One of the most beautiful incidents was when Jesus stilled the storm. He had been teaching the multitude on the sea shore by parables, and explaining their meaning to the disciples privately. At the close of the day, being tired, and in need of rest, our Lord suggested that the disciples should cross to the other side. The blue waters of the lake were alive with fishing boats scudding before the breeze. In a short time, Jesus fell fast asleep in the stern of the ship. Suddenly, the sky became dark, and the wind rushed down the valleys, whipping the water into angry waves. A violent storm sprang up ; the boat tossed in the trough of the seas, and rapidly filled with water.

Realizing their danger, the disciples were amazed to see Jesus still sleeping peacefully, just as if nothing had happened. Unable to understand His apparent indifference to their safety they waked Him, with the

cry, 'Master, carest Thou not that we perish?' So terrified were the disciples that they really thought the ship would sink.

Now was the time for Him to shew that not only could He heal men of their diseases, but that the whole range of Nature was subject to Him, and that the winds and the sea obey Him. With a wonderful calm and majesty, He silenced the cries of the excited disciples, and said to the boiling waters, 'Peace, be still.'

'Save, Lord; we perish!' was their cry.

'Oh, save us in our agony!'

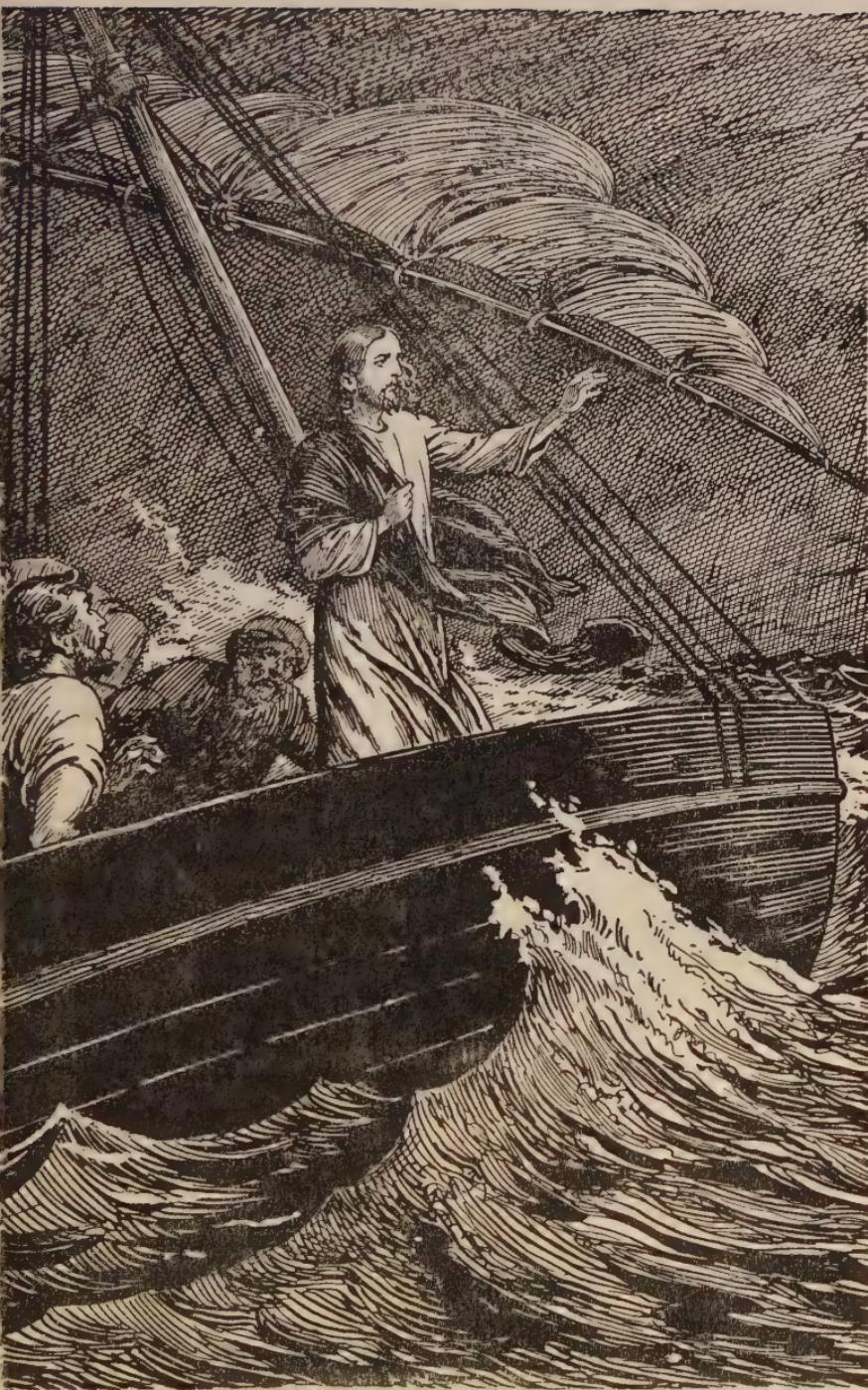
Thy word above the storm rose high,—

'Peace, be still!'

The wild winds hushed, the angry deep  
Sank, like a little child, to sleep,  
The sullen billows ceased to leap,  
At Thy will.

At the words of Jesus, the waters subsided, the clouds broke, the colours of the sky once more imparted their glow and freshness to the quiet surface of the Galilean lake. We can understand the wonder of the disciples. Not only had our Lord stilled the storm without, He had also quieted the tempest in their own hearts, rebuking their unbelief and calming their fears. No wonder a great awe fell upon them as they exclaimed, 'What manner of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey Him?'

Two storms upon the Sea of Galilee are recorded in St. Mark's Gospel. We have been considering the first; now let us turn to the second. After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus constrained the disciples once again to take ship and row to the other side of the lake. He sent the multitude away, and sought the solitude of a mountain to rest His soul in undisturbed communion with God. It was probably springtime, for in the account of the miracle we



**Jesus Stilling the Storm.**

read that Christ commanded the people to sit down on 'the green grass.'

In the cool of the evening, and as the sun slowly set in the western sky, our Lord communed alone with His Heavenly Father.

The disciples, however, out on the lake, were not able to make much progress, for 'the wind was contrary.' The evening light was fast fading, and they were quickly becoming exhausted by their fruitless efforts to make any headway.

As Jesus saw their boat being buffeted by the waves, His sympathy went out to them. So he resolved to go to their help. To the amazement of the disciples, a figure was seen through the gloom and darkness walking on the water. This was more than their already overwrought nerves could stand. They failed to recognize our Lord, and cried out in fear, thinking He was an apparition.

But, as in the earlier storm, so again He calmed their fears with the words, 'Be of good cheer: it is I, be not afraid.' As soon as they saw who the figure was, the courage of the disciples returned, and with characteristic impetuosity Peter leapt overboard. He, too, would walk on the water, and so be the first to greet Christ. Jesus told him to come; but the disciple had not gone very far before the boisterous wind, and the sight of the waves frightened him. He at once began to sink, and called on our Lord to save him. And immediately—how quick our Saviour was to answer those who called on Him,—immediately He stretched out His hand and caught Peter, rebuking him for his lack of faith.

Then, Jesus entered into the boat, the wind dropped, all danger was over, and in a short time they safely reached the land of Gennesaret. The

incident made such an impression on the minds of the disciples that we are not surprised they worshipped Him, saying, 'of a truth Thou art the Son of God.'

It was at the lakeside town of Capernaum that Jesus first appeared in public in the synagogue, and made His first declaration concerning His mission. The service began at an early hour. The congregation would be composed chiefly of farmers and fisherfolk drawn from the surrounding country. The streets are full of people hurrying to the service, their dresses giving a splash of colour to the animated scene. Probably they knew Jesus would be present, as it was the custom for the ruler of the synagogue to invite any important visitor to preach. Listen to the opening prayer as Jesus almost certainly heard it that morning : 'Blessed be Thou, O Lord, King of the world, who formest the light and createst the darkness, who makest peace and createst everything. . . . Blessed be the Lord our God for the glory of His handiwork and for the light-giving lights which He has made for His praise . . . . Amen.'

Then would follow a second prayer, 'With great love hast Thou loved us, O Lord our God, and with overflowing pity hast Thou pitied us, our Father and our King. For the sake of our fathers who trusted in Thee . . . . have mercy upon us and teach us. Enlighten our eyes in Thy law. . . . Unite our hearts to love and fear Thy name. For Thou art a God who preparest a salvation and hast chosen us from among all nations. . . . Blessed be the Lord who in love chose His people Israel ! Amen !'

After more prayers we can see the crowded congregation bowing their heads for the six Benedictions, 'Blessed be the Lord our God, the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. . . . Blessed art Thou, Jehovah, the shield of Abraham.'

. . . . Blessed art Thou Jehovah, who quickenest the dead. . . . Thou art Holy, and Thy Name is Holy. Blessed art Thou, Jehovah, God, the only One. Amen.'

After the liturgy is over, the minister approaches the Ark and takes the Roll of the Law and then the Roll of the Prophets. At this moment Jesus, amid the tense expectation of the crowded synagogue, comes forward. The roll of the prophet Isaiah is handed Him, and He reads the lesson.

If any of you have been present at a service in a Jewish synagogue, you will be able to imagine the scene at Capernaum on that Sabbath morning.

As Jesus closed the book and gave it back to the official, the eyes of the vast congregation were fastened upon Him. When He began to speak, their wonder grew ; ' they were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.'

The Scripture they had listened to so long was fulfilled that day in our Lord. With a calm authority they could not understand, He lifted the old Law on to a higher and nobler plane, while making it clear that He had come not to destroy, but to fulfil it.

As the worshippers were listening with rapt attention, Jesus was interrupted by the piercing cry of a demoniac, ' What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth ? art Thou come to destroy us ? I know Thee, who Thou art : the Holy One of God.'

One can imagine the uproar as the congregation watch the poor demented creature wildly addressing Christ. But as they note the serene expression on the face of our Lord, they become quiet. In a tone of authority He rebukes the unclean spirit, saying, ' Hold thy peace and come out of him.' There



Jesus teaching the Multitude at the Sea of Galilee.

was a short sharp struggle, and the devil came out of the man, leaving him unhurt. It is no wonder they were all amazed, and that the fame of Jesus spread into the region round about.

The service over, an excited crowd followed Him to the house of Simon Peter, where He had been invited to dinner. James and John were also present to meet the Master. Instead of the usual Sabbath calm, the house was in a state of confusion. Dinner was not ready. Fever, the dreaded disease of that hot, low lakeside, had seized the mother of Peter's wife. Immediate action was needed, so the disciples appealed to Jesus. He at once came into the room where she lay, lifted her by the hand, and 'the fever left her and she ministered unto them.'

As the evening shadows lengthened, the sound of hurrying feet and eager conversation shewed that something unusual was happening. The fame of the great Healer had been noised abroad, and the sick and suffering were flocking to Him from all directions so that He might touch them. The sufferers, their bodies racked with pain, were to be seen everywhere, even down to the boats on the shore, and the brown nets of the fishermen drying on the beach.

As Jesus looked on them from the doorway of Peter's house, a great pity surged up in His heart. His keen tender sympathy was deeply touched as He beheld this human wreckage. He had refused to use His miraculous power to satisfy His own hunger in the wilderness. It was a trust from God to use on behalf of the sick and suffering, so we see Him moving amongst the afflicted, touching the fevered bodies into health, giving sight to the blind, and causing the lame to leap for joy.

It was a day crowded with works of mercy, and as

the darkness fell, Jesus must have been very weary. But the next morning He rose 'a great while before day,' and Peter found Him praying on the brown hillside. After the hours spent amid such scenes of suffering the previous day our Lord felt the need of solitude to take in fresh reserves of spiritual strength.

## CHAPTER X

### JESUS, THE GREAT HEALER

O Thou through suffering perfect made  
On whom the bitter cross was laid,  
In hours of sickness, grief, and pain,  
No sufferer turns to Thee in vain.

The halt, the maimed, the sick, the blind,  
Sought not in vain Thy tendance kind,  
Now in Thy poor Thyselv we see,  
And minister through them to Thee.

BISHOP WALSHAM HOW.

No one can be more justly described as the 'Great Healer' than Jesus. We cannot too often remind ourselves that He bore not only the sins of men, but their sicknesses as well. The healing of sickness was as much a part of our Lord's ministry as preaching the Gospel. At the very commencement of His public work, He placed these two things in the forefront of His ministry : ' The spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor ; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind.'

The public life of Jesus is just a wonderful story of compassion. His whole being was stirred when He came in contact with suffering men and women. He could not endure that any should go unhealed. Our Lord faced danger and opposition rather than a poor sufferer should be left for a single day in the bonds of pain.

Now let us follow the Great Healer on some of His errands of mercy. It is interesting to know that

Cana, where Jesus attended the wedding of two of His friends, and turned the water into wine, is only twenty miles distant from Capernaum. It was to Cana that our Lord returned after His first visit to Samaria.

During His sojourn there He probably stayed with Nathanael of Cana of Galilee, the disciple whom He had drawn into the circle of His friendship a few months before.

All Galilee was excited at the news of the arrival of the Great Healer. Twenty miles away, the people of Capernaum were eagerly discussing Jesus, and the news of the fishermen who talked so much about Him. His visit to the lakeside town was eagerly awaited. But before proceeding to Capernaum our Lord gave a notable proof of His compassion and power.

While He was at Cana, the only child of a nobleman of Herod's court, supposed by some to be the king's chamberlain, lay dying. The courtier heard that Jesus was coming to the town where he lived, but by the time the Good Physician arrived his son would be dead. What was he to do?

As in the case of the daughter of Jairus, the parents loved their child dearly. His serious illness filled their hearts with a great sorrow and a great foreboding. So realizing the danger of delay, the distracted father hurries to Cana to seek Jesus. All others have failed: he will appeal to the Great Healer as a last resource.

It grieved our Lord that so many only came to Him to be cured of their diseases, or to seek His help on behalf of their sick loved ones. Even several of those who came to be healed were slow of heart to believe in His Divine mission, and their lack of faith pained Him much. Such was the thought in

the mind of Jesus as He looked at the nobleman, ' Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.'

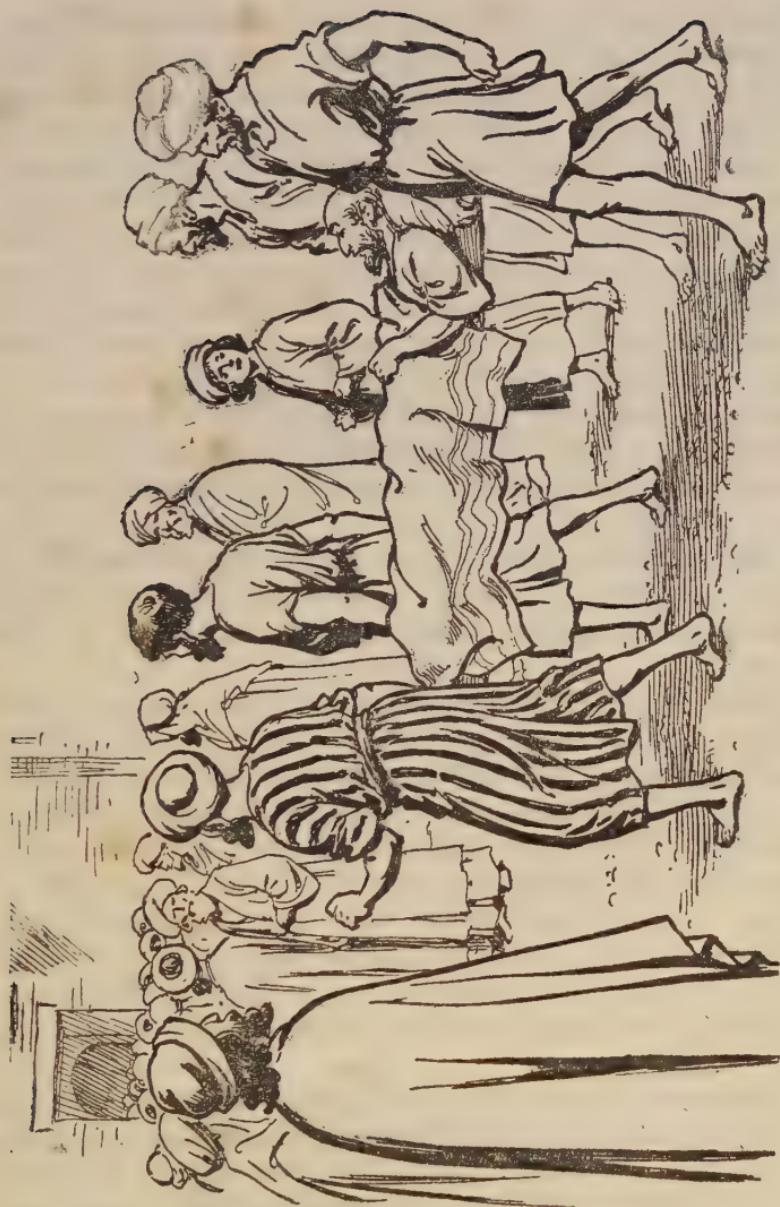
But the courtier was so distressed that he did not understand what our Lord meant. It was enough for him that his son lay at the point of death in Capernaum, and the Good Physician had the power to restore him to health and strength.

Such faith Christ always honours. Those who trust Him never find their trust misplaced. It was so in the case of the nobleman's son. As Jesus looked into the face of the courtier, and saw the sunken eyes and furrowed brow, outward and visible signs of agony of mind, His heart went out in loving sympathy both to the father and to the distracted mother who was keeping watch over her sick child in the home in Capernaum. In an instant, the Great Healer changed sorrow into joy, ' Go thy way, thy son liveth.'

It is not difficult to imagine the happiness and gratitude which welled up in the heart of Herod's officer as the meaning of the words gradually dawned on his troubled mind. At first the announcement, like all good news, dazed him. But the words gradually chased the shadows from his mind as the pale light of dawn drives away the darkness of the night. He immediately hurries back to Capernaum to share the relief and gladness with his anxious wife. As the nobleman reaches the suburb of the town, his heart leaping for joy, he meets a runner from the house. Breathless with excitement, he questions the man.

' What news of my son ? Is the boy better ? When did the fever leave him ? ' In reply to the father's eager inquiries, the messenger tells him the good news. The fever left his son at the seventh hour, the very hour in which Jesus had announced that the child would live.

After healing the sick on that memorable first



Bearing the Sick of the Palsy to Jesus.

Sabbath in Capernaum, Jesus planned a tour with Peter through the towns and villages of Galilee. This is a journey of which there is hardly any account.

The healing of the leper, the one incident of which we have any record, is full of tender beauty. Repulsive, and until now in despair, the wretched creature forces his way through the shrinking crowd and cries in an agony of supplication, 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.' We might naturally have expected a shudder, and a natural recoil from such a loathsome sight. Yet so sensitive to every form of suffering was the Good Physician that He did not hesitate to stretch forth His hand to touch a man regarded as unclean and branded as an outcast by his fellows.

It is not only a miracle, but a parable also. As Jesus touched the leper, so He still lays His clean hand on the leprosy of sin, and it is cleansed by His touch.

Now the tour is ended. Jesus returns to Capernaum. Here an eager crowd awaited His arrival, and surged round the house where He was to stay.

Not far away lived a man sick of the palsy, a helpless paralytic. Both he and his friends had no doubt heard of the wonderful works of our Lord, and a great hope sprang up in their minds. Could they but invoke His aid, the palsied man might be cured. The problem was how to reach Him. The crowd besieged the very passages ; there was no room even at the door.

But with the health of the paralysed man at stake, the four men carrying their helpless friend on a litter would not be repulsed. If they could not get through the door into the house, they must find another way. And so by an outer staircase they climbed on to the roof.

Then, with the energy of desperation, they lifted the tiles, tore up the light rafter that supported the roof, and lowered the sick man on his mattress to the very feet of the Great Healer.

Among those listening to Jesus were many Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem, who bitterly resented this unceremonious act. But Christ never rebuked any one in need for seeking His help. Completely ignoring their surly looks and angry protests, He gazed with compassion at the sick of the palsy. He saw the true burden which lay on that afflicted heart, He knew the fear and remorse which haunted the sufferer's conscience, and going straight to the root of a deeper trouble than his palsy, the Good Physician said, 'Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.'

It was an utterance that aroused the bitter anger of the Scribes and Pharisees. 'Why doth this Man thus speak,' they cried. Surely the paralytic had come to be healed of a bodily disease. Was he to be put off by religious talk about the forgiveness of sins?

To the religious leaders of the people such a declaration was nothing short of blasphemy, and they began to reason among themselves saying, 'who can forgive sins but God alone.' But with Jesus it was more important that this man should be made to realize that, in the mercy of God, his sins were forgiven, than he should be healed of the palsy. Our Lord healed the diseases of the heart before those of the body.

Therefore, to confound the Scribes and Pharisees, He accepted their challenge. He knew what they were thinking ; the reasonings of their hearts were known to Him, although they did not suspect it. So, to shew He was the Son of God, and had authority on earth to forgive sins, He said to the

sick of the palsy, 'Arise, and take up thy bed, and go unto thy house.'

We can imagine the cynical expression on the faces of the visitors from Jerusalem as Jesus spoke to the helpless man. They confidently expected the paralytic to remain where he lay, unable to move, and stretched in pain. The hour of their triumph was at hand. The Carpenter from Nazareth would be discredited before all the people in the busy town of Capernaum, where He had made His second home.

To their dismay, and to the surprise of the crowd, the sick of the palsy immediately rose from the couch, picked it up, and went to his house glorifying God. It was a complete and convincing answer to the challenge of the Scribes and Pharisees. The joy of the man at being delivered from his condition of utter helplessness must have been equalled only by his wonder at the power and love of his Healer.

The people were amazed at what they saw. Many had come to the house in a spirit of idle curiosity. Others were probably persuaded by their friends, while some came to listen to our Lord's teaching before they decided to accept Him. But the one object of the Scribes and Pharisees, who did not believe in Jesus, was to seek an opportunity to accuse Him or to trip Him up in His speech. It was only the fear of the multitudes that kept the religious leaders from laying hands on Him.

The number of earnest seekers after truth among those who came to listen to the teaching of Jesus was probably few. Friends and enemies alike were amazed at what they saw. The declaration of our Lord that He could forgive sins did not impress them, though the religious leaders regarded such a claim as blasphemy.

But to see a man stricken with paralysis completely

restored was something they could neither understand nor deny. They were bound to admit the evidence of their own eyes, and the common people, more responsive to Divine influences than the hardened and cynical Scribes and Pharisees, 'glorified God, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.'

What the religious leaders from Jerusalem said we are not told. The incident certainly increased their resentment against Jesus, and their fear of the people. The time had not yet come for Him to be delivered into their hands, so they redoubled their efforts to poison the mind of the multitudes, until, at last, even Capernaum rejected Him.

It is in connection with the healing of the sick of the palsy that we hear the first murmur of opposition to our Lord's teaching. These same Scribes and Pharisees were the men who ultimately brought Him to the Cross of Calvary.

Here is another word-picture of the Great Healer, sketched for us this time in St. John's Gospel. During the celebration of one of the feasts of the Jews, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. By the sheep gate, or sheep market, there was a pool, called in Hebrew, Bethesda. The pool is identified to-day with the Fountain of the Virgin. It was fed by an intermittent spring, which possessed healing virtues, just as the waters at Bath and Harrogate do.

The gate leading to the spring had five porches, and here the sick, lame, and blind gathered, waiting for the moving of the waters, and begging alms from the wealthy visitors to the Holy City. It was to this pool of healing that the Good Physician turned His steps on the Sabbath of the Feast.

At the sight of the waiting crowd His heart was moved with compassion.

One poor paralytic, who had been there thirty-

eight years, especially attracts His attention. With the passing of time the sufferer had lost all hope, and given way to despair. Laying a kindly hand on his shoulder, the Great Healer asks, 'Do you wish to be well again ?'

'Sir, I have long since given up all hope. There is none even to put me into the pool when the water is moved. As I hobble painfully to the edge, some one else pushes in front of me.'

The answer shews the man was crushed. He has no friend to wait by his side for the welling up of the healing spring. He can think of no other source of help. But something in the manner of Jesus causes him to hope. Will this kindly Stranger help him ? Even while he wonders, the command of Christ sounds in his ears, 'Arise ! take up thy bed and walk.'

He was immediately restored to perfect health ; like the sick of the palsy he 'took up his bed and walked.' It is another of those vivid pen-pictures that we find in each of the four Gospels.

Before the man could return home with his couch he was challenged by the Jews for carrying it on the Sabbath.

'It is not lawful,' they said, 'for thee to take up thy bed on the Sabbath.'

But to their protest the man promptly answers, 'He that made me whole said unto me, "Take up thy couch." He gave me strength and told me how to use it. If, without Him, I am helpless, I must use the strength He has bestowed to fulfil His commands.' It is a principle we should always remember. It must be our answer when we are challenged for obeying the law of Christ. He who gave us life has the right to direct it.

On His return to Capernaum our Lord performed

another wonderful work of healing. This time His enemies set a trap for Him. When He arrived at the Synagogue on the Sabbath, there was a man in the congregation with a withered hand. The Scribes and Pharisees watched very carefully to see if Jesus would heal him.

How different the scene is from His first appearance in the Synagogue at this same lakeside town. On that occasion, when He cast out the unclean spirit from the demoniac, the vast congregation was filled with wonder and sympathy. There was no jealous watching nor resentment at His teaching.

Now things are different. Since His first visit to Jerusalem the chief priests and Scribes had been awaiting an opportunity to kill Him, but they feared the multitude. This appeared to be their chance.

Tradition says the man was a stonemason, and that he implored the Good Physician to restore to him the use of his arm. Be that as it may, the sight of the man's suffering appealed to Jesus. He looked first at him and then at the congregation. The Great Healer knew exactly what the chief priests and Scribes were thinking. He was well aware of their hardness of heart, and the callousness which would let this man suffer rather than be healed on the Sabbath, that the letter of the Law might be fulfilled.

What was His attitude? With a sublime disregard of those who had come to accuse Him, He looked straight into the face of the sufferer and commanded him to 'Stand forth!'

It appeared to the enemies of our Lord that He had fallen into the trap. Their opportunity had come. They had seen for themselves that Jesus was prepared to break the Jewish Law by healing this man with the withered hand on the Sabbath Day. We can imagine the scene. There is the poor sufferer standing in the

presence of the crowded congregation. The Pharisees scowl at Christ, waiting to accuse Him, but His calm strong face is untroubled and serene. He looks first on the mason and then on those who would charge Him.

While the people wonder what will happen next, the Pharisees open the attack. First of all they try to trip Jesus up in His speech, so that they may bring an accusation against Him.

Meanwhile, the congregation watch the contest in silence. 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath Day?' In spite of the bitterness behind the question, and the fact that He knew the purpose for which they had come, our Lord reasoned with them.

'If any of you had a sheep, and it fell into a pit on the Sabbath day would you not rescue it? Surely a man is of more value than a sheep. How, then, can it be wrong to relieve human suffering on the Sabbath? If it is lawful to rescue a sheep, it is lawful to heal this man with the withered hand.'

It was a question to which the enemies of Christ could give no answer, although they knew the words to be true. Then, in the silence that fell on the congregation, the Good Physician bade the man 'stretch forth his hand.' He did so, and the poor withered flesh was made whole. The power of touch was restored to him, suppleness and flexibility returned to his joints and fingers, and he was able once more to earn an honest living at his craft.

Instead of bringing conviction to the hearts of the Scribes and Pharisees, the miracle only maddened them still further. Afraid to speak to the congregation in the Synagogue, they went out and held a Council against Him how they might destroy Him, just as their fellow-conspirators in Jerusalem had done a few weeks before.

Another work of mercy performed on the Sabbath Day was the healing of the man blind from birth. The incident occurred in Jerusalem during the Festival Week. One day, as Jesus and His disciples were walking near the Temple, they noticed a blind man begging alms from passers-by. The sightless eyes at once awakened the pity of Jesus, as suffering in any shape or form always did.

The disciples thought the man's blindness was the result of sin, and began to discuss what they regarded as an interesting problem. 'Master, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind? Who is to blame?'

But the Great Healer had not come to speculate about the mystery of pain, or the problem of suffering. He had come to heal men of their diseases.

'Neither did this man sin nor his parents. He is not responsible in any way. But the works of God are to be made manifest in such as he. The time will come when I shall not be able to do the works of my Heavenly Father who sent Me; the night cometh when no man can work.'

In this way Jesus made it clear that, together with life's suffering, there comes God's call to relieve it. The touch of pain is one of the things we cannot understand, but it gives opportunities to each of us for doing kindness and shewing sympathy. By succouring the afflicted and ministering to the sick we help them to see in our love and pity the greater love and pity of God, just as our Lord shewed them to this blind man.

With the quick sense of the blind, the beggar heard the Good Physician speak of the works of God. He wondered what Jesus meant. Suddenly he felt a gentle touch as the Saviour anointed his eyes with clay. But the miracle was not wrought at once.

The man was told to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. And so, guided through the scoffing crowd, he groped his way to the pool, hoping against hope that he would receive his sight. The instructions of the Great Healer have been carried out. What a moment of suspense, as he waits to see if his faith and obedience will be honoured !

Then, wonder of wonders, his eyes were opened, and for the first time in his life he saw. The poor, sightless eyes, which had never known what it was to behold the beauty of the sky or the glory of the setting sun, to look on the faces of his friends or to watch the silvery light of the moon on the water, were able to gaze up into the blue vault of heaven. They could see the towers of Jerusalem and the magnificence of the Temple for the first time. It was like being ushered into a new world, and to the man must surely have seemed like entering Heaven. This is not the end. He was a familiar figure in the streets, both to the inhabitants of the city, and the many visitors to the Temple, who were in the habit of coming up to Jerusalem for the feasts. As they ascended the great marble steps, they may have given him alms. The beggar was soon surrounded by an excited crowd asking eager questions. 'Is not this the blind man that sat and begged at the Temple gate ?'

'Certainly it is. I know him well. I have often noticed him when attending the Feasts.'

Others, however, were not so positive. 'This man certainly looks like him, but I think you must be mistaken. He was blind from birth, how then can he see ?'

But the beggar greatly surprises them by answering their questions himself. 'Yes,' he cries, 'there is no doubt about it. I am he. I am the man blind from birth, who used to beg alms at the Temple gate.'



Jesus Healing the Leper.

Then the wonder of the crowd began to grow. Unable to understand how it was his sight had been restored, they asked in tones of astonishment, 'How, then, were your eyes opened?'

To their question he replied that Jesus made clay, anointed his eyes, and told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. 'I washed and do see.'

Still not satisfied, they asked him where Jesus was, but as our Lord had quietly gone away, he could not tell them.

Then one of the crowd, probably with evil design, suggested the beggar should be brought before the Pharisees in Council so that they might sift the matter. This was done, and so honest and straightforward was the man's story, that instead of denying the miracle as they wished him to, they cast him out of the Synagogue for declaring that Jesus was the Christ. Then the baffled Pharisees took counsel among themselves how they might accuse our Lord.

But in their excitement and confusion the members of the Council could not agree. Something must be done to discredit the miracle, and so, as it was the Sabbath Day, the old charge was brought against Jesus of breaking the Jewish Law.

'This Man is not from God, because He keepeth not the Sabbath Day.' Others said, 'How can a Man that is a sinner do such signs?'

At last, in despair of ever reconciling their differences, they ask the man to tell them frankly what he thinks of Jesus. 'What say you of Him in that He opened thine eyes?'

The beggar answers in tones of quiet assurance, 'He is a Prophet.'

It is difficult to know which to admire more, the quick perception and independence of the man, or the courage with which he faced the Council, although

he must have known the danger that threatened him by his emphatic confession of faith in our Lord.

Determined not to be finally beaten, the Pharisees called for the man's parents. 'Is this your son who you say was born blind? How do you explain the fact that he is now able to see?'

But the parents were afraid of the power of this terrible priesthood. They knew that if they confessed Jesus to be the Christ, they too, like their son, would be expelled from the Synagogue. Perhaps they were important members of that body. Whether that was so or not, they feared the Council, and sought to evade the question.

'We know this is our son, and that he was born blind. But how his sight was restored, or who opened his eyes, we are unable to say. Ask him. He is of age. He can speak for himself.'

So once again the beggar is called before the Pharisees. 'Give glory to God,' they cried: 'we know that this Man is a sinner.'

But the man blind from birth had no patience with their quibbling. To their questions and protests he replied, 'Whether He be a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.'

His answer irritated the Council still more.

'What did He do? How was your sight restored?'

'I have already said, but you refused to listen,' replied the man. 'Is it your wish to hear the account all over again?' Then, in a tone of irony, 'Would you also become His disciples?'

The patience of the religious leaders was now exhausted. They no longer argued, but descended to personal abuse. 'Thou art His disciple; but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God hath spoken unto Moses: but as for this Man, we know not whence He is.'

The beggar was not to be intimidated. Quietly and firmly he reminds his accusers that since the world began none had opened the eyes of a man born blind. It was a thing unheard of. If this man were not from God, it would have been impossible.

To the Pharisees such talk was insolence. Who was he, a blind beggar, who all his life had entreated alms at the Temple gate, to argue with the doctors of the law, and the learned members of the Synagogue? 'Dost thou teach us?' they cried in tones of withering scorn. 'Thou wast altogether born in sins.' And they cast him out. From henceforth he shall be an outcast, excommunicated from the Church, and denied the privileges of a member of the Synagogue. All religious Jews would shun him as though he were a leper.

But Jesus heard of his punishment, sought him out, and made known more fully who He was. He gave the outcast an assurance of friendship far outweighing in value what he had lost.

As the man poured out his heart in gratitude to Jesus, we may be sure the Great Healer told him of the Eternal Love which came down from Heaven to seek and to save that which was lost. The door of the earthly Church might be closed against him, but he saw in Jesus the Light of the World.

And so to our Lord's final question, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' the beggar declares his belief without reserve or hesitation. 'Lord, I believe.' Not content with a mere confession of faith, he worships the Saviour with all the fervour of gratitude and a new-found joy.

So far we have been noticing some of the instances in which Christ brought relief to physical suffering; but He also cured mental disorders, and, as we have seen in the case of the sick of the palsy, healed men

of the deeper spiritual disease of sin. No sickness ever frustrated the skill of the Good Physician, no sorrow ever exhausted His compassion. In our day, there are men who make a special study of special diseases. One undertakes the brain, another the eyes, another the heart. They are what we call 'specialists.'

But Jesus was no specialist. He ministered to mind and body alike, and healed all manner of diseases. His healing was all inclusive. Never was the Great Healer happier than when He was lifting a load from some poor sufferer's heart and mind. To alleviate pain was His supreme joy.

And so the Word had flesh  
And wrought with human hands the creed of creeds ;  
In loveliness of perfect deeds  
More strong than all poetic thought.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE TEACHING AND PARABLES OF JESUS

Thou art the Truth ; Thy word alone  
True wisdom can impart ;  
Thou only canst inform the mind,  
And purify the heart.

BISHOP DOANE.

THE two chief means which Jesus used during His public ministry, and which aroused such attention and enthusiasm, were His miracles and His teaching. We have already thought of our Lord as the 'Great Healer'; let us now consider Him as the 'Great Teacher.'

The disciples came to know Him, through His death on the Cross, as their Redeemer, and through His Resurrection as their King. But, during His lifetime, He was first and foremost their Teacher. He was known to them as 'Rabbi,' which is the name given by every Jew to his teacher. It was in this capacity that Christ made His first public appearance in the Synagogue. St. Matthew tells us He went about all Galilee preaching in the Synagogues.

He was at first recognized by some of the doctors of the Law as one of themselves. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these signs that Thou doest, except God be with him.'

It was not only in the Synagogues that Christ taught. Before long His preaching created wide-

spread excitement, and attracted large crowds. Sometimes the multitude on the shore of the Sea of Galilee was so dense, that the Great Teacher had to enter a ship to avoid the crowd, and speak to them from the deck, as they stood on the sloping beach. At other times, He taught the people on the flower-strewn hillsides, a notable occasion being the Sermon on the Mount, the greatest discourse ever preached.

From the first, His teaching made a profound impression. He spoke with an authority which was altogether lacking in the utterances of the Scribes. The common people were astonished at His teaching, 'for He taught them as having authority, and not as the Scribes.' Even the officers had to confess to the chief priests and Pharisees, when the latter asked why they had not brought Jesus, 'never man spake like this Man.'

All the words of the 'Great Teacher' reported in the four Gospels could be printed in the columns of a daily paper, yet they are the most precious possession of the human race.

When Charles Dickens was asked what was the most beautiful story in literature, he answered, 'the Parable of the Prodigal Son.'

The poet Coleridge declared he knew of no passage in any writing to compare with the Sermon on the Mount.

On one occasion, that great statesman, Edmund Burke, was asked to name the most impressive address ever given on the rights of man. His reply was the Beatitudes of Jesus. No words are so loved by children the world over as, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God.' The assurance of Christ, 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house

are many mansions ; if it were not so, I would have told you ; for I go to prepare a place for you,' has set the face of many a confirmed invalid and dying man and woman towards the sunrising.

The message of George Fox, on his death-bed, to the Quakers on the Delaware was, ' I am the Light of the World ; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life.'

Probably, the saying best loved by all men and women is that wonderful sentence, ' For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.'

About one-third of the utterances of our Lord recorded in the Gospels are in the form of parables. His teaching was full of the most exquisite illustrations. He thought and spoke in images. His discourses were full of colour and poetry. The incidents of everyday life were turned by the ' Great Teacher ' into charming word-pictures to enforce the truths He wished men to learn.

Just as a skilful artist will sketch a human face, or a beautiful landscape, with a piece of common chalk or charcoal, so Jesus took ordinary objects and incidents and changed them into perfect pictures, in the same way as the old alchemists claimed to convert the base metals into gold. You, boys and girls, remember the illustrations in a sermon after you have forgotten the sermon itself. And so the parables told by the ' Great Teacher ' will never be forgotten.

We listen to Him telling of the lost sheep, and the ninety and nine that were safely in the fold, of the virgins with their lamps going out to meet the bridegroom. We see the rich man feasting in his palace, and the beggar lying at the gate with the dogs licking



**The Prodigal Son.**

his sores, the prodigal son feeding the swine in the far country, the Good Samaritan taking compassion on the man who had fallen among thieves. These are some of the pictures hung in our minds at which we are never tired of looking.

The Greek word from which 'parable' is derived means something set down by the side of another. When you are given a difficult lesson at school, your teacher is setting something before your mind. But, so that you may understand, he illustrates it. This illustration is something set down by the side of the lesson to make it plain.

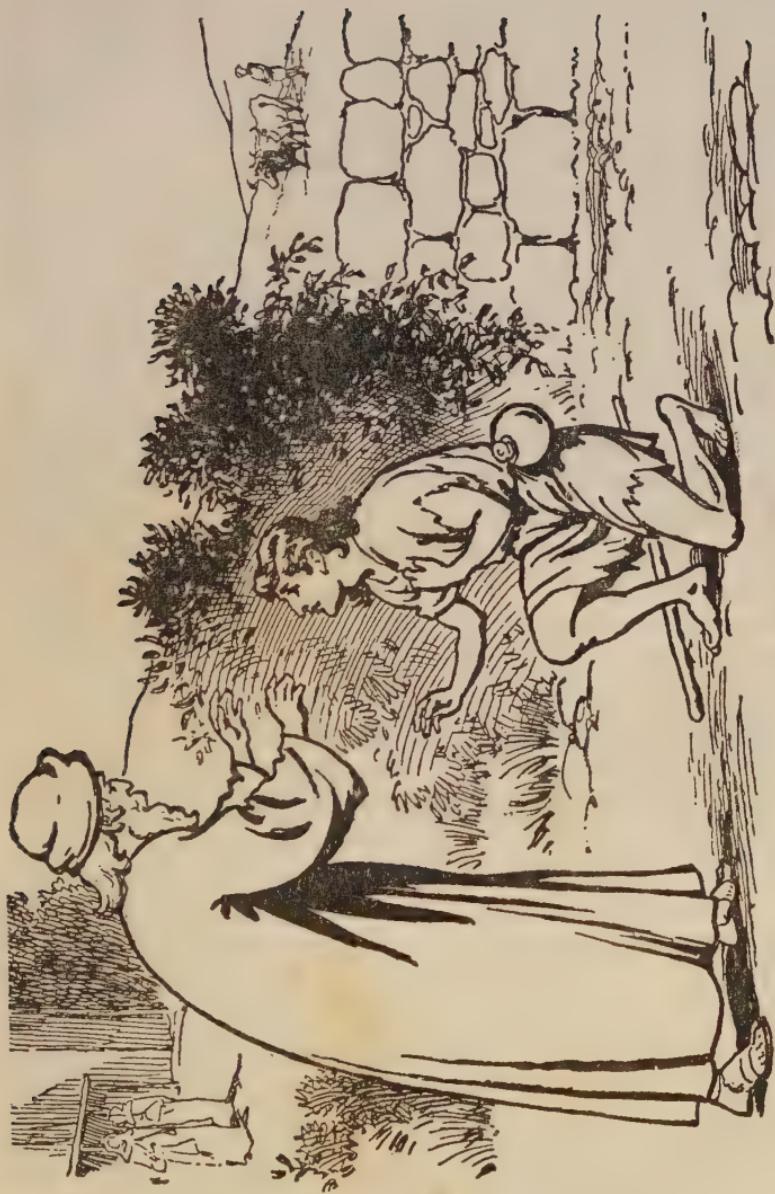
Now let us notice some of the truths taught by the 'Great Teacher,' and then some of the parables with which He illustrated them.

One of the dominant, and certainly one of the most important is the Fatherhood of God.

'When ye pray,' said Jesus, 'say, our Father.' It is a name Christ was never tired of repeating, and is used in the Gospels on more than seventy occasions. This thought runs through some of the most beautiful parables of our Lord like a vein of gold. Let us take the three which may be described as the 'lost' parables, *i.e.*, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son.

In each case it is not the sheep, or the coin, or the son the 'Great Teacher' is thinking of so much as the person who lost them. The emphasis is on the distress of mind of the owner. The shepherd with the hundred sheep, the woman with the ten pieces of silver, and the father who had two sons, were all alike in this respect. Each had lost one, and the loss of that one caused them all more concern and searching of heart than that which remained.

These parables are a revelation of the heart of God. They tell us that He loves those who wander



The Father's Welcome.

from His fold and are 'lost,' with a greater love even than our earthly parents. He loves the wanderers and outcasts just as our Lord did when He was here on earth, for the mission of Jesus was to seek and to save the lost, and thus to make known the compassion of His Heavenly Father.

We know that God delights to answer prayer. It is not enough that others are happy and contented. You must be also. There is only one sheep out of the ninety-nine missing, the woman has only lost one piece of silver, the father still has one son. Surely, then, they have enough. But the heart of God grieves till that which was lost is found. He yearns over the lost sheep in the mountains, sick and helpless, with none to succour it. The thought of the woman sweeping the floor for that piece of silver, which means so much to her, fills Him with compassion, and as He sees the prodigal son in the far country among the husks and the swine-troughs, He is moved with a great pity. God seeks those who remain outside the fold of His love with an earnestness and a persistency that never despairs. He is the Shepherd who seeks for the lost sheep, 'until He find it,' just as the woman sought and found the piece of silver.

The patience of God is wonderful. There is a story told by Bulwer Lytton about a boy who had left home and wasted his substance in riotous living in London, quite regardless of the sorrow he caused his parents. The father is pictured as a clean-living, upright, honourable soldier, whose heart is broken by the excesses of his son. He wanders through the streets by day and night, visiting places of evil repute, in the hope that he may come across his son, who is still dear to his heart.

That is a very inadequate picture of our Heavenly

Father seeking the lost. He loves us with an everlasting love. There is more joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repents, says Jesus, than over ninety and nine just persons who have no need of repentance. The joy of the Father is emphasized by our Lord in the parable of the prodigal son. Just as the cool, sweet air of early March sets the chaffinch singing at the return of spring, so the joy-bells of Heaven ring when, in response to the pleading of God, the prodigal returns.

Such is the Fatherhood of God. In Lord Lytton's story the old man found his son among the slums of London after months of searching. We can imagine the joy which thrilled his heart. Ingratitude could never kill a father's love. And so, says the Great Teacher, 'there is a joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, and comes back to the Father.'

The picture of Dives and Lazarus illustrates another aspect of Christ's teaching. The contrast between the wealth and luxury of the rich man's mansion, and the wretched beggar, diseased in body, and clothed in rags, who begged alms at his gate, shews how callous to suffering we can be. There was Dives, surrounded by comfort, clothed in purple and fine linen, with a retinue of servants to attend to his every want, and to humour his every whim. He was able to gratify all his desires, however extravagant they might be. The stately mansion blazed with light, and he gathered round his board a brilliant assembly of friends. The plaudits and laughter of the guests continue far into the night as the revelry grows fast and furious. The thought of Lazarus never occurs to the rich man.

Outside is the poor beggar in all his misery. Perhaps from where he lies he can hear the sound of

laughter, and see the light of the brilliantly-illuminated rooms. He is thankful for the scraps thrown out by the slaves. Such is his plight that even the dogs, which in our Lord's day were the scavengers of the street, come and lick his sores.

But the gay, fashionable society inside the mansion only regarded him with contempt. He was an outcast, to be shunned by all respectable people. To go near him was to be defiled. It is a vivid picture of abject poverty and flaunting luxury existing side by side.

Dives is not charged with any evil conduct, nor with acquiring his wealth by dishonest means. As far as we know, he lived a perfectly respectable life in the eyes of his fellow men. In his own circle of wealthy friends he was probably highly respected.

What, then, was his sin? It was the sin of an unloving heart, a failure to recognize that Lazarus had a claim upon his sympathy. He was willing the scraps from the table should go to the blind beggar at the gate, but that was as far as he was prepared to go. Dives was too proud to cross the gulf fixed by his opulence and the poverty of Lazarus, and was content to let the beggar remain in the cold and rain outside.

Then, with startling abruptness, we read, 'the beggar died and was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died and was buried.' The scene has changed to the other world. The conditions of the rich man and the beggar are reversed. It is not by accident that Jesus has painted this picture against the background of the eternal. The parable still centres on Dives. The mansion and worldly possessions he has not been able to carry with him beyond the grave.

But character survives death. Responsibility is

not left behind. Away somewhere in the vast spaces beyond we see him. During his life on earth the voice of conscience was stilled. He had no scruples in allowing Lazarus to be content with the crumbs from his table while he lived in luxury every day. Now he sees. He knows. 'In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.'

In the solitude of the world of conscience he beholds the beggar whom he once despised. Perhaps he feels the loneliness of an unbrotherly world, as Lazarus did when he was on earth. So he prays that the sympathy and comfort which he denied to others may be given him in his time of need; but it is too late. In digging a gulf between himself and Lazarus when on earth, Dives was digging a gulf between himself and God. It cannot now be crossed.

In that other world Abraham reminds him of his days of prosperity. 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things. Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed.'

This rich man stands as the representative of 'unbrotherliness,' and cannot be helped until he himself learn its misery. There is no 'great gulf' too wide or deep for Christ to bridge; but in this parable Jesus shews that good and evil can never be reconciled.

This same subject is touched on in the story of the Good Samaritan. This time it is a despised Samaritan who teaches us that we must love our neighbour as ourself. When the lawyer, who sought to betray our Lord into an indiscreet reply, asked Him, 'who is my neighbour?' the Great Teacher answered his question with this parable. The only

claim the man who fell among thieves had to the sympathy of the passers-by was his need.

The commandment of our Saviour is that we love one another, and so fulfil the law of Christ. That was what the good Samaritan who cared for the wounded man and took him to the inn did.

As Jesus moved through human life, He was the Helper of all who were in need, and the friend of publicans and sinners. None called upon Him in vain. His ministry was spent, not only in caring for the wounded on life's highway, but also in binding up the deeper wounds of the human heart, and giving life to them that sat in darkness and the shadow of death. Any act of kindness shewn to the least of these His brethren is done unto Him.

In the parable of the Day of Judgement, our Lord said to those who were to inherit the Kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, 'I was an hungred and ye gave Me meat : I was thirsty and ye gave Me drink ; I was a stranger and ye took Me in ; naked and ye clothed Me : I was sick and ye visited Me : I was in prison and ye came unto Me.' And in reply to their question when they had so ministered unto Him, Jesus answered, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'

Another truth which finds a prominent place in the teaching of Christ is that of individual responsibility. That is to say, we are all stewards, and shall one day have to give an account of our stewardship. We are held responsible for the talents with which we have been entrusted.

It is not enough that we should obey the rules of the Church or conform to the laws of society. We must make the law of Christ the guiding principle of our lives. See how this is illustrated in the case of



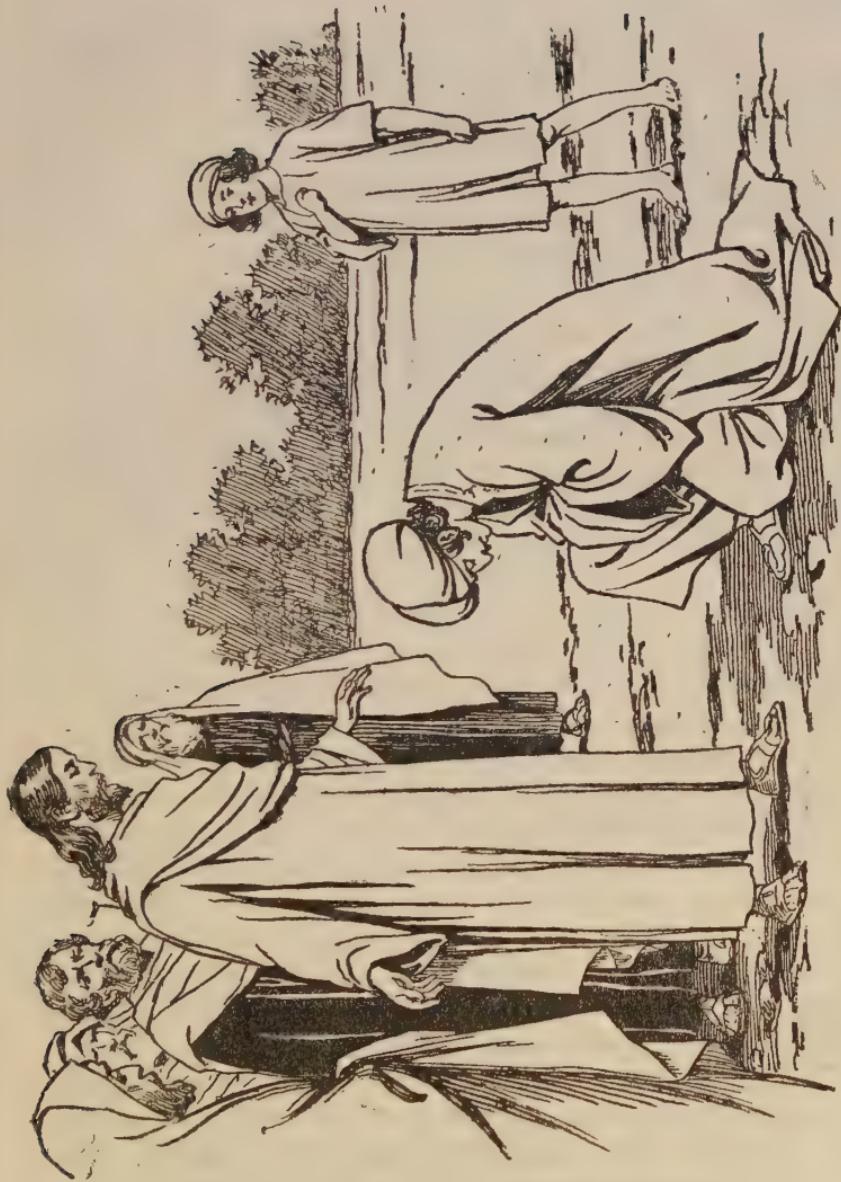
The Good Samaritan.

the rich young ruler. He possessed admirable qualities, was conspicuous in the Synagogue, and observed the letter of the Law. Yet, all the time he was conscious of a great lack in his life. He had high ideals of life and duty, so he asks the Great Teacher. 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He is honest and sincere, and aspires to higher things. Jesus sees the good intentions and the lofty aims which are struggling to find expression, so He asks, 'Why callest thou Me good? None is good, save One, even God. Thou knowest the commandments.'

The reply came as a great surprise to the young man. Had he not been obeying the letter of the Law ever since he was a boy? He observed the religious ceremonial of the Synagogue, and paid his tithe regularly. What then did the Master mean?

As the Great Teacher looked on his frank, open face, He loved him. He knew him to be an earnest seeker after truth; so looking straight at him, Jesus pointed out the one thing that stood between him and the higher life he was seeking to live. 'One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.'

There was the challenge. The Master had told him the one essential condition yet to be fulfilled. Beyond that He could do no more. The responsibility rested on the shoulders of the young ruler. Here was the opportunity for which he had been waiting so long. For some time past God had been speaking to his spirit. The vision of what he might be floated before his mind, only to fade away. The high ideals and generous impulses to which he longed to give effect were like the shadowy outline of a



‘Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’

dream. They eluded him before he could translate them into reality.

We should expect his heart to be filled with a great joy. Alas ! we read that, ' his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful : for he was one that had great possessions.'

It is not surprising the Great Teacher said to the disciples, ' how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.'

In the Parable of the Pounds, recorded in St. Luke's Gospel, we are taught that we hold our gifts in trust for others. You will remember Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a nobleman going into a far country. We are told the parable was spoken by Christ as He was nearing Jerusalem. Popular feeling was excited, and eager expectation kindled, that on His entry into the Holy City the kingdom of God would immediately appear. The people imagined that during the approaching Feast of the Passover He would publicly declare Himself to be the Messiah, and lead the population in revolt against imperial Rome.

In the Parable a certain nobleman goes into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. Before starting on the journey, he summons his ten servants, and, after explaining the object, he gives them ten pounds with which to trade and carry on his business. In this way he would be able to test both their ability and their fidelity. Each servant received a pound, *i.e.*, a mina, which, among the Jews, was worth about £6 sterling.

But the citizens declared they would not have him to reign over them. Their protests were unavailing. He received the kingdom, and after making the necessary arrangements for its administration, returned to his mansion. One of the first things he did

was to send for the servants to whom he had entrusted the money, to know what profit they had made by trading during his absence.

In reply to his questions, the first one said he had made ten pounds more. This pleased his master much. He had proved worthy of the confidence reposed in him, so his services are recognized. 'Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.' It is not difficult to imagine the joy of the servant as he sees his fidelity so handsomely rewarded. Probably such a thought never occurred to him while his master was away.

The satisfaction of the nobleman is still further increased when he learns that the second servant has made his one pound into five. He also reaps the fruit of his labours, and is appointed over five cities.

The next servant has a different story to tell. Unlike the others, who put the money to a profitable use, he had wrapped his pound in a cloth and hidden it away. For some reason he feared his master, and imputed motives to his actions which were not shared by the other servants. 'Thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.'

Even if the servant had refused to trade with the pound, he could have put it in the bank, so that when his master returned he might have drawn it out with interest. But he confessed he had not done so, and was therefore judged out of his own mouth.

As we watch the servants standing by the long, red-covered table in their master's office, we are reminded that we also have been entrusted with talents. They are given to us to use so that we may bring joy into the lives of others.

Whatever gift God has endowed us with, whether it be health or wealth, knowledge or influence, is to be

used for His glory. All our talents have been given for the furtherance of His cause, and for the good of others. In this parable, each servant received a pound. In the similar Parable of the Talents, recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel, one man received five talents, another two, and another one.

Each received 'according to his several ability.' The parable teaches that God will not require more from us than we are able to give. It is for us to be faithful in the use of the gifts with which we have been entrusted, and then, even if we have only one talent, we shall receive the reward promised to the good and faithful servant.

Another thought suggested by the parable is that if we do not use the faculties with which we have been endowed, they will be taken from us. We shall lose them by allowing them to remain unused. A garden rose left uncultivated will degenerate into its original wild state. The reason why the mole has lost its sight is that for long years it has lived underground, refusing to employ its eyes, and the penalty is blindness. In India there are religious fanatics, known as fakirs. Some of these will stand with clenched fists, week after week, until at last they cannot open them, having lost the use of their fingers.

In the same way, the finer sensibilities of the spirit become blunted by not availing ourselves of the means of access to God. If we do not pray and regularly read our Bible, the spiritual world loses its reality. We must use, if we would keep our Heavenly Father's gifts. Ceasing to give, we cease to have. Such is the law of love.

The supreme example of the teaching of Jesus is to be found in the Sermon on the Mount. This teaching was unlike anything the people had listened to in the Synagogue. There was nothing about the

washing of hands or the cleansing of the vessels of the sanctuary, and all the petty rules and observances to which the Scribes and Pharisees attached so much importance. It cut right across all the meaningless ceremonial of the Jewish ritual, and laid the emphasis on the spirit, and not on the letter of the Law.

The teaching proclaimed by the 'Great Teacher' was utterly different from anything that had been heard before. Listen to the gracious Beatitudes as they fall from His lips :

Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers : for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake.

The teaching was so new and so strange that at first the disciples must have found the Sermon almost impossible to believe. Here are the laws of the new kingdom which Christ had come to establish. It makes no appeal to force of arms or military conquest, but is founded on character. It is only by the application of these laws that the world can be won for Jesus, and become the kingdom of God and of His Christ. These are the principles which must guide your actions and mine, if we are to be true followers of the 'Great Teacher.'

Many illustrations in the parables of our Lord may be traced to the sights and sounds of the silent years of preparation at Nazareth. When He compared the Kingdom of God to leaven, the thought

of Mary mixing the flour for the weekly bread-making, and putting the yeast into the dough flashed across His mind.

The Parable of the Sower may well have been suggested by one of His walks round Nazareth. He had probably watched the Galilean farmer turning the rich brown soil for which the country was famous. Our Lord had seen him going up and down the furrows on a fresh spring morning, scattering the seed to right and left.

As Jesus addressed the multitudes from a boat on the Sea of Galilee, He was reminded of those early days. He remembered that some seed fell on rocky ground, with no depth of earth, and withered under the glare of the sun. Other grain fell on the dusty road, and was devoured by the birds in their search for food. Some fell on good ground and bare fruit, thirty, sixty, and some a hundredfold.

In the parable the seed which the sower scattered was the word of the Kingdom. Sometimes it fell on hearts hardened by sin ; in other instances it was received by those who had no depth of character, and endured only for a while ; in other hearts the seed was choked by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, and became unfruitful. But to the joy of the Sower, there were some whose hearts were like ' good ground.' The seed germinated and produced a rich harvest, even a hundredfold.

There are many other parables recorded in the Gospels. How vividly the ' Great Teacher ' describes the man who built his house upon the sand, the woman sewing a piece of new cloth on an old garment, the man who found the pearl of great price, and the bursting of an old bottle !

These, and many other scenes and incidents, Jesus wove into His teaching, and used them to illustrate



The Sower.

the truths He taught. Such was the power, and beauty, and freshness of His teaching, that it appealed to all classes of hearers, rich and poor, learned and unlearned alike. And, what is more, it is just as true to-day as when the voice of Christ was heard by the lakeside and in the hills of Galilee. The words that He speaks are spirit and life. They are for all and for all time.

From everything our Saviour saw,  
Lessons of wisdom He could draw,  
The clouds, the colours in the sky ;  
The gentle breeze that whispers by ;  
The field all white with waving corn ;  
The lilies that the vale adorn ;  
The little birds that fly in air ;  
The sheep that need the shepherd's care ;  
The fruitful and the thorny ground ;  
The piece of silver lost and found ;  
The wandering sheep brought back with joy ;  
The father's welcome for his boy ;  
The wedding feast prepared in state ;  
The foolish virgins' cry, ' Too late ! '  
All from His lips some truth proclaim  
Or learn to tell their Maker's name.

Let us all be willing scholars in the school of the 'Great Teacher,' for if we learn of Him, we shall find rest unto our souls.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE LAST SUPPER AND TRIAL OF JESUS

When as rolls the sacred year,  
Each fresh note of love we hear ;  
When the Babe, the Youth, the Man,  
Full of grace Divine we scan,  
When the mournful Way we tread  
Where for us His blood He shed ;  
When on Easter morn we tell  
How He conquer'd Death and Hell ;  
When we watch His spirit true,  
Heaven and earth transform anew ;  
Then with quicken'd sense we see  
Why He said 'Remember Me.'

ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY.

As we draw near to the close of the earthly life of Christ, let us try to picture the events that immediately preceded His entry into Jerusalem for the third and last time.

Six days before the Passover we find Jesus at Bethany. Here were some of His dearest friends : the two sisters, Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus, whom our Lord had raised from the dead. We can imagine the joy of the little family circle as they once more welcomed the Saviour into their midst.

Bethany was one of the few towns where Jesus was welcomed, and since the raising of Lazarus the people were specially attached to Him. And so Martha and Mary prepared a feast in honour of Christ, which was given in the house of Simon the leper, who was probably a close friend or relation of Mary and Martha and Lazarus.

Martha served, Lazarus was one of them who sat

at meat, while Mary made the occasion memorable by an act of devotion to her Lord that will never be forgotten. With the true instinct of a woman she had divined the reason why Jesus was going up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of the Passover. He Himself was the Paschal Lamb to be offered as a sacrifice for sin on the Cross of Calvary. Her love was quick to realise His sorrow and His danger, and, breaking an alabaster vase of costly spikenard ointment, she anointed the feet of our Lord and wiped them with her hair.

She realised that Jesus was about to die. This might be the last opportunity of shewing her love, and so, in her extravagance of affection, she desired in this way to anoint His body for the burial. It was a beautiful expression of Mary's devotion, but the disciples failed to see the beauty of her action. To them it was sheer waste. And Judas Iscariot, who, ere the week was out, would betray his Master, said in scornful tones, 'Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor ?'

St. Mark tells us the traitor said this, 'not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the bag, took away what was put therein.' Judas, the dishonest treasurer of the little band, was exasperated at the loss of a chance of selling the spikenard, and taking the money for himself. So, while the fragrance of the ointment filled the house, this offering of love was begrimed and condemned.

'Let her alone,' said Jesus; 'she hath wrought a good work on Me.'

The disciples would have many opportunities of helping the poor, for they were always with them; but the twelve would not have Him always. Soon His outraged and desecrated body would be taken down from the cross. And Mary, unable to save

Him, had done all she could. She had anointed His body beforehand for the burial.

It was for this that Judas had rebuked her. But this woman understood the lonely heart of Christ, and saw His last need. With an enthusiasm of appreciation and admiration seldom equalled in the Gospels, Jesus declared Mary's action, and the spirit that prompted it would never be forgotten, that the odour of the ointment would fill the world. 'Where-soever the Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be told for a memorial of her.'

The following morning the road to Bethany was thronged with people, who had come to see Jesus and Lazarus whom He raised from the dead. From the tents on the hillside, in which the pilgrims on their way to keep the Passover in Jerusalem had encamped, crowds poured into the village. There they tarried until the next day, which was Palm Sunday, as it is now known.

It was a memorable day in the life of Christ; a day when He enjoyed His one brief hour of triumph. For the first time He definitely proclaims Himself as the promised Messiah. The news spread that Jesus intended to ride at the head of His disciples into Jerusalem. The idea of a triumphal procession fired their imagination.

And no sooner did the disciples appear, with their Master riding upon an ass, than the crowd was carried away by an outbreak of loyal enthusiasm. By a flash of spiritual insight they recognized Him as their true King. Here was the One of whom their own prophet, Zechariah, had spoken, 'Behold thy King cometh unto thee riding upon an ass.' In their enthusiasm the people tore down branches from the palm trees growing by the road side. Others

flung their cloaks on the path before Him to cover the dust as with a carpet, a custom observed in the East in royal processions.

Picture the scene as the Saviour of the World rode to Jerusalem for the last time. The slopes of the hills outside the Holy City are covered with pilgrims, from all parts of the country, rending the air with shouts of loyalty and songs of devotion until, as the procession drew near to Jerusalem, the sounds of triumph were heard in the streets. Everyone is talking about Him. The whole city is in a state of excitement. Jesus of Nazareth, He whom the Galileans say is the Messiah of God, is coming to the Feast ! And He comes in Royal State.

Just as the crowning of a new monarch, and the fanfare of trumpets announce him king, so does our Lord by accepting the hosannas of the crowd as He rides into Jerusalem declare Himself to be their King. The proud Judæans were roused out of their complacency. Higher and higher rose the cry of the pilgrims, 'Hosanna to the Son of David, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,' a cry that sent a chill to the hearts of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Alas ! that the triumph was so short-lived ! Soon the crowd which hailed Him as their King were crying, 'Crucify Him, Crucify Him !' His claim to kingship, by intensifying the fear and hatred of the chief priests, brought Him to the cross, and crowned Him with a crown of thorns.

The time of the Paschal feast draws nigh. Unlike even the poorest of the people, Jesus, who was Himself the Passover Lamb, had no room where He and His disciples could celebrate the great deliverance. So He sought out one of His secret friends, and said to the disciples, 'Behold, when ye are entered into the

city, there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water ; follow him into the house whereunto he goeth.'

It is a beautiful story of the devotion of an unknown disciple, who had placed his room at the disposal of Christ, and reads like one of the old romances when loyal subjects declared in secret their allegiance to a king whom they could not openly acknowledge. And so, in the quiet of this upper room, safe from the intrusion of His enemies, Jesus celebrated the Passover with the disciples. ' And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the apostles with Him.' After His brief ministry of three years, our Lord was about to partake of the Last Supper.

One of our great artists, Holman Hunt, has painted Christ in the Carpenter's Shop at Nazareth. It is near the close of day. The golden light of the setting sun floods the workshop with glory. Jesus is stretching Himself, and as He extends His arms, His shadow falls across the room. Mary sees, to her dismay, that it is in the form of a cross.

The distress of Christ on this dark betrayal night is surely enough ; but His chosen companions add to it by a dispute as to which of them should be the greatest. The disciples hustled into the room, angry and full of resentment. Until now they had washed the dust from one another's feet before sitting down to eat ; but now, no one moved. None was willing to declare himself the servant of the rest, so our Lord Himself ' began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.'

What a picture of humility ! The eternal Son of God doing the work of a slave. Think of Jesus washing the feet of Judas, who in a few short hours would betray Him.

But Peter breaks the silence with an emphatic

protest. 'Never, Lord, never, as long as I live, shalt Thou wash my feet.' 'Peter, if I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me.' Then the disciple is not only willing, but with characteristic impetuosity asks Christ to wash his hands and his head.

As the twelve reclined at the table, the Master knew one of them would betray Him. So He gave the sop to Judas with the words, 'That thou doest, do quickly.'

None of the disciples, with the exception of John, understood. But Judas did. He knew he was no longer an apostle, and so, 'having received the sop, he went out straightway: and it was night.'

As the Supper draws to a close, Jesus rises from the couch, with a look in His wistful eyes the disciples had never seen before. 'Take eat,' He said, as He handed them the broken bread, 'this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' After the same manner, also, He took the cup saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of Me.'

The Supper ended, the little company sang a hymn, and went out unto the Mount of Olives.

Just after the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas betrayed our Lord into the hands of His enemies by a traitor's kiss.

Jesus was led first to Annas, the ex-primate of the Jewish Church. There was no court, but merely an informal gathering of councillors waiting for the Sanhedrin to open at dawn.

The calm bearing of Christ offended the old priest, so after asking Him a few questions, Annas orders the Prisoner to be brought before Caiaphas, the President of the Sanhedrin. It was at the palace of Annas that Peter denied his Master thrice, just as Jesus had said.



**Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.**

The court of the Sanhedrin was assembled in the council-room within the precincts of the Temple ; Caiaphas, the High-priest, occupied the president's chair. The duty of this court was to prepare a charge for the prosecution in the Roman court.

But the accusers of our Lord were in a difficulty. If they were to accomplish their evil purpose, they must find a charge that would appeal to Pilate, the Roman governor. Such offences as Sabbath-breaking, rebellion against the priesthood, or ignoring Rabbinical law would not be sufficiently serious to convict Jesus before a Roman tribunal. What were they to do ? Even with false witnesses, the only charge they could bring was that in His early ministry He had threatened to destroy the Temple, and build it again in three days, a saying to which they gave an altogether wrong meaning.

As Jesus stood before Caiaphas, calm and dignified, answering nothing, the patience of the High-priest is exhausted. ' I adjure Thee, by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ.'

Clearly the composure of the Prisoner was beginning to trouble Caiaphas. With a sublime courage, Jesus declares He is the Christ, well knowing that such a claim will be accounted blasphemy by the Sanhedrin court.

And so it is. The President rends his garments, as a high-priest was expected to do when he heard blasphemy, and affirms that no more witnesses are necessary : by His own confession this Jesus of Nazareth was worthy of death. Thus ended the investigation.

Then the court became a rabble. Jesus was handed over to the cruelty of the mob. They spat in His face, they struck Him with their fists, and mocked Him

saying, 'Prophesy unto us, Thou Christ: who is he that struck Thee.'

Such was the fury of that Eastern mob against the Saviour of the World, while Caiaphas and the Council looked on the shameful scene with callous indifference.

We are now in the Roman Law Court. It is about seven o'clock in the morning, and as soon as the usual preliminaries are over, the Governor opens court. Here is a dignified judicial atmosphere very different from that of the Sanhedrin. The trial was in the courtyard of Pilate's palace. The Governor occupies the judgement-seat, surrounded by officials, with a bodyguard of Roman soldiers in the background.

Jesus is brought in. Over against Him stand His accusers, with Caiaphas at their head. We have found the Prisoner guilty, say the Sanhedrin representatives, of three charges: (a) Stirring up the nation, (b) Forbidding tribute to Cæsar, (c) Proclaiming Himself to be a King. The first two accusations Pilate brushed aside, but the third was a dangerous charge, which a Roman Governor would be bound to treat seriously.

But, by the tribunal of Roman law, the highest tribunal on earth, Christ was declared 'Not Guilty.' 'I find no fault in this Man,' was the verdict of Pilate.

So great was the clamour of the crowd, however, that the Roman Governor had not sufficient courage to resist the surging mob, who cried out, 'He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judæa, and beginning from Galilee even unto this place.'

So Pilate asked them whether the Prisoner was a Galilean, and on being answered in the affirmative, sent Him to Herod, who was in Jerusalem at the time. Herod was 'exceeding glad' to see Jesus, as he had

heard so much about Him, and he hoped our Lord would perform some miracles for his amusement. This was the prince who had so cruelly murdered John the Baptist, and in reply to his frivolous questions, Christ 'answered him nothing.'

When at last Herod could bear the silence no longer, he set Him at nought and mocked Him. To ridicule the claim of Jesus to kingship, he arrayed Him in a royal robe and sent Him back to Pilate. In His hour of humiliation our Lord was the means of reconciling these two former enemies, for we read that Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day.

Now was the decisive hour for the Roman Governor. Had he sufficient strength of character to abide by his own verdict and acquit Jesus, or would he yield to the rabble shouting outside the court? He called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and told them he found no fault in the Prisoner. Neither Pilate nor Herod had found any truth in the charges of His accusers. But in order to keep the favour of the religious leaders he suggested he should scourge Jesus, and then, as a tribute to justice, release Him.

The effect of the Governor's proposal was to infuriate his hearers still more, who, instead of being pacified, cried out altogether, 'Away with this Man and release unto us Barabbas.'

Still determined, if possible, to liberate the innocent Prisoner, Pilate thought of another expedient. He was already troubled because of a message received from his wife while sitting on the judgement-seat, 'Have thou nothing to do with this just Man, for I have suffered many things this night in a dream because of Him.'

It was the custom of the Roman Governor to



Judas threw down the money and went out.

release to the people, on the morning of the Feast, any prisoner they might desire.

At this moment, while the fate of Jesus was still in the balance, an excited mob came thronging up the avenue leading to the Palace to demand what Pilate had never denied, the release of any prisoner they chose.

The Governor offers to set Jesus free, but to his dismay the rabble shouts, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him !'

The crowd demands the liberation of Barabbas, a political prisoner in jail for insurrection. The fierce cry of the mob rings out, 'Let Him be crucified.'

Pilate's temper is roused. He will not crucify the Prisoner. He will scourge Him and let Him go.

The Governor then orders Jesus out before the people. The Roman soldiers had flung Herod's purple cloak over His shoulders and crushed a wreath of thorns upon His brow. 'Jesus therefore came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man !'

As the Governor looks on in wonder and perplexity, a voice rings out across the court, 'He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.'

This increased the fear of Pilate, and going into the palace, he asked the Prisoner, 'Whence art Thou ?' But Jesus gave him no answer.

'Speakest Thou not unto me ? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee ?' As if He were the judge trying to make some allowance for the Governor, Christ replies, 'Thou wouldest have no power against Me, except it were given thee from above : therefore, he that hath delivered Me unto thee hath greater sin.'

St. John tells us, upon this, Pilate again sought to

release the Prisoner, but the implied threat in the challenge of the Jews, 'If thou release this Man, thou art not Cæsar's friend,' is more than the Governor can face.

So he tries to save himself by throwing the responsibility back upon the surging mob. 'When he saw that he prevailed nothing, but rather that a tumult was arising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous Man. See ye to it. And all the people answered and said, His blood be on us and on our children !'

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE STORY OF THE CRUCIFIXION

Is it not strange, the darkest hour  
That ever dawn'd on sinful earth  
Should touch the heart with softer power  
For comfort than an Angel's mirth ?  
That on the Cross the mourners' eye should turn  
Sooner than where the stars of Christmas burn ?

JOHN KEBLE.

WE now come to the supreme tragedy of history. When Jesus set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, He knew where the journey would end. He ' knew that His hour had come,' and with a sublime courage that has never been surpassed, He faced the bitter cross to save you and me from our sins.

Those who visited Calvary on the evening of Good Friday would see few signs of the great tragedy, except the trampled grass, and a few blood stains where the three crosses had stood ; yet that green hill, outside the city wall, is to-day, for thousands of men and women, the most sacred spot on earth. As soon as the death sentence had been passed, Christ was handed over to the Roman soldiers, and hurried away to the place of execution. One specially cruel feature of death by crucifixion was that the condemned man had to carry the cross upon which he was to die. So Jesus was compelled to bear His cross in the sight of the mocking, jeering crowd who looked upon Him with scorn and contempt.

The fact that two robbers were sent to their death at the same time shewed what the Roman officials thought of the Saviour. To them He was a Prisoner



Jesus led away to be crucified.

who had passed through their law courts in the ordinary way. Thus Jesus and the two theives, each carrying his cross, were hustled from the Judgement Hall to Calvary, the place of execution.

Many legends have gathered round the last journey of our Lord before His Resurrection. There is the story of the Wandering Jew.

It is said that when Christ was staggering under the weight of His cross, He leaned against the door of a house. The owner of the house, imbued with the same spirit as the cruel mob, struck the Sufferer, and told Him to hurry on. Jesus turned to His assailant, and, according to the legend, is reported to have said, 'Thou shalt go on and never stop till I come again.' The wretched man is supposed still to wander, unable to find any place of rest. The story is probably a picturesque representation of the fate of the Jewish nation, which, since the day its leaders cried, 'His blood be on us and on our children,' had, until the liberation of Palestine by the British in the Great War, no country it could call its own.

The proud city, concerning which our Lord said, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto her ! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not !' had rejected Him. From henceforth her citizens and their children were to be scattered over the face of the earth, and to find no rest for the soles of their feet.

Although Christ bore His cross through the gates of Pilate's palace, after the scourging, and all the indignities He had suffered, His strength began to fail Him.

Just at that moment a man from Cyrene, Simon by name, was coming towards the city. Cyrene was

in North Africa, where Tripoli now stands, and it is possible Simon was a despised African Jew, and as such would be considered a suitable person to bear the cross of a criminal, always regarded as a shameful and humiliating experience. He may have been living in or near Jerusalem, or he may only have come to the Holy City for the Feast of the Passover, but, in any event, he happened to meet the procession on its way to Calvary, and was given the cross to bear.

No doubt Simon was commanded to carry it by the Roman soldiers as an insult. They mocked him as he staggered underneath the unexpected load. But what greater honour could be conferred on any man than to bear the cross on which Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the World, was to be crucified ? It appears this chance meeting with our Lord resulted in Simon's conversion. St. Mark's Gospel mentions him as ' the father of Alexander and Rufus.' Evidently the two sons were well known to the Christians for whom the Evangelist was writing. It is generally believed the family of Simon became members of the Christian Church because the father had met Jesus in the hour of His distress and carried His cross. In later life, this experience would assuredly be one of Simon's most sacred memories.

One of the most painful facts in connection with the death of Christ was the change in the attitude of the multitude. Only a few days before, on that first Palm Sunday, the crowd had flung their garments before Him, and strewed the road with branches of palm, crying in their enthusiasm, ' Hosanna ! to the Son of David.'

They acclaimed Him as they would a mighty conqueror or a victorious general. Yet, a few days later, Pilate had stepped out on to the balcony of the Roman law court, and made a final appeal for pity,

the infuriated mob greeting the Governor's words with the fierce and angry shout, 'Crucify Him ! Crucify Him !'

Some in the crowd heard the cry with sorrow and dismay. Among these were a few true and faithful hearts from Galilee, who had not forgotten the happy days at Capernaum. There was the Roman centurion, who declared his belief in Jesus as the Son of God ; there were the daughters of Jerusalem, who wept and mourned their loss, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

There is no instance in the New Testament of a woman taking sides with the enemies of our Lord ; 'when their husbands and brothers were hounding Him to death they accompanied Him, with weeping and wailing, to the scene of martyrdom.'

So on His sorrowful journey to the place of execution, Christ experienced these two mitigations of His sufferings ; Simon of Cyrene relieved His body of the weight of the cross, and the daughters of Jerusalem ministered to the grief of His heart. It was to these He turned when He said, 'Weep not for Me, but for yourselves and for your children.'

Even when His body was racked with pain, Jesus could forget His own sufferings in His thought for others. He could see the terrible fate which was shortly to overtake the city. He knew that in a few years Jerusalem would suffer as no city has ever suffered before or since. And as He foresaw the horrors of the coming siege, there passed over His heart a wave of compassion.

Thus the sad procession moved on till it reached Calvary, or Golgotha, both words meaning, 'the place of a skull.' It may well have been the place

set apart for the execution of malefactors, and on that account received its name.

Before the procession reached Golgotha, the cross was handed over by Simon to Jesus, who bore it the rest of the way Himself. St. Luke tells us the two malefactors were led with Christ to be crucified.

The journey ended, the preparations for the actual execution began. It was the custom for those about to be crucified to deaden the agony with a draught of wine before they were nailed to the cross. This was provided by the wealthy women of Jerusalem out of sheer compassion. But when Jesus was offered a cup of wine, mingled with myrrh, He refused it, and chose to face death with His mind unclouded. It was another instance of the heroism of Christ.

So they nailed Him to the shameful tree. It is impossible for human thought to conceive the suffering our Saviour endured. The humiliation which characterized His death was to that pagan world a confession of defeat. It paid little attention to the weak and helpless, to the broken and despised.

The mob that surged round Calvary could not understand that the crown of thorns was to be transfigured into a royal diadem, and that the cross was to become a throne from which Jesus would rule the world. 'I, if I be lifted up,' He said, 'will draw all men unto Myself.'

Taunt after taunt was flung at the Sufferer by the mocking rabble; 'He saved others: Himself He cannot save.' 'He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on Him.' 'Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself: if Thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross.'

But such was the love of Christ, that He not only refrained from rebuking them, but in the hour of

unspeakable suffering, He prayed, ' Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Such was the answer of our Lord to the insults and sneers of His enemies.

Jesus spoke seven times while He was nailed to the Cross, and the words He uttered have come to be known as the ' seven sayings.' They are these :

1. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.
2. To-day shalt Thou be with Me in Paradise.
3. Woman, behold thy son ! Behold thy mother !
4. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?
5. I thirst.
6. It is finished.
7. Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.

It is probable, in the storm of derision, only those quite close to the cross heard Christ's prayer for the forgiveness of His enemies. It caught the ear of one of the malefactors, and touched a long silent chord in his heart. The voice of memory spoke to him, recalling the early years of lost innocence. He was ashamed both of himself and the vengeful rabble that mocked an innocent Victim. The sight of Jesus awakened feelings long buried in his life of crime.

The sight of His suffering, His submission to the insults and indignities heaped upon Him by the mob, and the prayer for the forgiveness of His murderers, were lenses through which the robber saw dimly the dawn of a new and better day.

By some instinct of faith he realized that the Sufferer beside him was no ordinary man. As the malefactor swooned in his agony, death drew near, but not before he had rebuked his fellow criminal, who in his recklessness had mocked Jesus. ' Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation ? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds : but this Man hath done nothing amiss.'

In a prayer in which faith and penitence were strangely blended just before he died, he turned to Jesus and said, 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.' To this pathetic appeal Christ answered with a promise of forgiveness and peace, 'Verily, I say unto you, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.' And so this penitent was the first-fruit of our Saviour's suffering on the Tree.

Well may we ask, 'Did ever the new birth take place in so strange a cradle?' Twice already Jesus had spoken from the cross. First, as a High-priest interceding on behalf of those who had hounded Him to the most cruel of all deaths; and, secondly, as a King promising a penitent thief a place in His Kingdom. As He looked out on the crowd, our Lord noticed a sad, lonely figure standing at the foot of the cross. That figure was Mary.

Beneath the Cross in tears  
The woeful Mother stood,  
Bent 'neath the weight of years,  
And viewed His flowing blood;

Her mind with grief was torn,  
Her strength was ebbing fast;  
And through her heart forlorn,  
The sword of anguish passed.

What a storm of sorrow beat on her as she looked with agonized gaze on the One who hung above her. No one shall hold her back, even though there is no earthly comfort for her now but to be near Him.

As the crisis of our Lord's suffering drew near, Mary was determined to be with Him to the end, even though she could not staunch His wounds or moisten His parched lips. Included in that little group were Mary, the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene, and John, the beloved disciple, who was closest to his Master both in life and death.

As Jesus looked from Mary to John, He exclaimed

to His mother, 'Woman, behold thy son !' And the love and tenderness He had always cherished for Mary coming once more to the surface, Christ said to the beloved disciple, 'Behold thy mother !' With His dying breath Jesus tenderly commended the Virgin Mary to the care of His dearest companion, the one who was ever spiritual, and swift in the keener sight of faith. 'And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home.'

The Saviour had now finally detached Himself from the earth, and turned alone to face the terrible experience of the last three hours.

To add to the solemn impressiveness of the scene, the light of the sun failed, a dense grey haze crept over the hill of death, and gradually deepened until the outlines of Olivet and the towers of the Temple grew dim and indistinct. Darkness covered the land, the very sun hiding its face as if in sorrow for the blackest deed history has ever known.

Such was the torture of physical pain and the unspeakable agony of that mysterious struggle that, 'about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?"'

It was the first verse of a Psalm full of prophetic meaning concerning our Lord's life and death. He had not sufficient strength to repeat the whole of it, but in this hour of supreme loneliness the invocations returned to His mind.

Such was the love of God that He gave His own Son to die for the sins of the world on the Cross of Calvary. Jesus drank the cup to its dregs so that you and I might have everlasting life.

We may not know, we cannot tell  
What pains He had to bear ;  
But we believe it was for us  
He hung and suffered there.

Some of those who stood nearest to the cross thought He was calling upon the prophet Elijah, whom popular imagination connected with the coming of the Messiah. 'This Man calleth, Elijah,' they said.

Just after the cry of the suffering spirit came the cry of the suffering body. It was when He had passed through the spiritual anguish suggested by His appeal to God that Christ became conscious of His bodily need. The supreme distress of crucifixion was thirst. It was this that drew from our Lord the fifth saying, 'I thirst.' One of the soldiers, therefore, taking a sponge, dipped it in vinegar, and putting it at the end of a reed, held it to Jesus' lips.

But some of the crowd were unwilling the request should be granted. 'Let be,' they cried; 'let us see whether Elijah cometh to save Him.'

Such was the heartless cruelty of the mob, that they would even deny the Sufferer a draught to moisten His burning lips, in order to see whether Elijah would come to rescue Him.

All His life Christ had thirsted for love, and even in those three hours of unspeakable anguish the fever that consumed Him was not so much for water as for a word of sympathy to break the oppression of His loneliness and desolation. At least, it must have been something to the innocent Victim that the Roman soldier had compassion on Him in His extremity. Amid the shadows of death it sufficed to shew our Lord that one heart had gone out to Him in pity.

Hardly had the soldier stepped back from the cross, when Jesus uttered the cry of victory, 'It is finished.'

The full meaning of those words we cannot grasp. At last our Lord's sufferings were at an end. With an

unexampled courage He had accomplished His work, and as He remembered the fierce battle He had fought and won, the words rang out like a shout of triumph.

And now, to comfort Him in His last moments, there came to His mind the prayer He had been probably taught by Mary. Gathering His failing strength, He cried in a loud voice that pierced the darkness, His last prayer, ' Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.'

During the three hours darkness which covered the earth, a legend says a boat was crossing the Aegean Sea. As the dark cloud advanced, the rowers were silent with fear. Suddenly, out of the darkened sky, they heard a voice saying, ' Pan is dead ; great Pan is dead.' The cry slowly rose and fell, and the terrified boatmen realised that the false pagan gods had acknowledged the supremacy of Christ.

That is a story. But the death of Jesus on that ' green hill far away ' is proclaimed everywhere to-day, and as men understand its meaning, they turn from their sin and superstition to bow in wonder and adoration before the crucified Son of God. When our Lord yielded up His spirit, there was a great earthquake. The ground rocked and heaved, there was thunder and lightning. The veil of the Temple, that is, the heavy curtain which separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the sanctuary, was split in two from the top to the bottom, thus signifying that Jesus died to save all men. There was to be no distinction between Jew and Gentile. The tombs were opened, and many of those buried in the graves cut out of the rock were raised from the dead.

The inscription Pilate wrote over the Cross was ' Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' It was a title the Jews bitterly resented as an insult to their

nation, and they entreated Pilate to alter the words. 'Write not, the King of the Jews,' they implored; 'but that He said, I am King of the Jews.'

The Roman Governor only ridiculed their request, and as if taking a strange satisfaction in bestowing on Jesus what in his heart he almost believed to be His true designation, Pilate replied, 'What I have written I have written.'

The inscription was written in Hebrew, the language of religion; Greek, the language of culture; and Latin, the language of law. How strangely prophetic the inscription was! He is King of kings and Ruler in every realm of thought and life. Pilate was wiser than he knew, for that title, inscribed in three languages, was a prophecy of our Lord's universal Kingdom, and of that day when, 'at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.'

As soon as the soldiers had completed their cruel work, they sat down to divide the spoils. It was a custom in the Roman Army that the belongings of those who were crucified could be claimed by the executioners. The legionaries, therefore, cast lots to decide which of them should possess the seamless cloak of Christ. So little were they moved by the Saviour's suffering that these soldiers settled to their lottery under the very shadow of the cross to part His garments among them, thus fulfilling the prophecy of the Psalm, 'upon My vesture did they cast lots.'

Among the crowd was a Roman centurion. When he, and they that were with him, saw the earthquake, and heard the final cry of joy and liberation that rang out from the cross, a wave of fear swept over their hearts. Never before had there been such events at an execution.

As the centurion watched Jesus, the scales fell from his eyes, and he made that memorable confession of faith, 'Truly this was the Son of God.' That confession has since been echoed by men and women of nearly every tongue and in almost all lands.

As we stand in wonder and adoration before the Cross of the Saviour of the World, we see there the symbol of a deathless love and of a deathless hope.

He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to heaven,  
Saved by His precious blood.

O dearly, dearly has He loved,  
And we must love Him too,  
And trust in His redeeming blood,  
And try His works to do.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS

Death could not hold Him, and ere many days,  
Before the eyes of those that did Him love,  
He passed up through yon ocean of blue air  
Unto the heaven of heavens, whence He came.

ALEXANDER SMITH.

WHEN Jesus cried, ‘ It is finished,’ not only were His sufferings at an end, but also the contempt and insults of His enemies. His sacred body was not to see corruption, nor was it to remain in the hands of those who nailed it to the cross.

The day after the Crucifixion being the Sabbath, it was necessary to clear away all signs of death. And knowing this, Joseph of Arimathæa, a secret disciple of our Lord, boldly went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, and although he had not dared to proclaim himself a believer openly, he had opposed the crime of the Council that condemned Christ to death.

Now he no longer concealed his devotion. Braving the scowls of the priests, this former secret disciple went to the Governor’s palace and asked for the body of his Master, so that he might bury it ‘ in his own new tomb.’

Round the city of Jerusalem was a ring of private gardens. One of these, situated near Calvary, belonged to Joseph. Here, in accordance with the custom of the Jews, he had made for himself a sepulchre ‘ wherein had never man lain.’

It was to this grave, hewn in stone, that the body of Jesus was carried, wrapped in a clean linen cloth, and made fragrant with myrrh and aloes brought by Nicodemus, another secret disciple, who was also a member of the Sanhedrin.

In that sorrowful procession were some of the devoted women who had stood at the foot of the cross. As they saw their Lord laid to rest on the rocky floor of the tomb, they lingered for a moment in silence, before a great stone was rolled against the mouth of the sepulchre, and the mourners returned to their homes to prepare for the Jewish Sabbath.

But although Jesus was dead and buried, the chief Priests and Pharisees were not happy. They remembered He had spoken of rising again on the third day. So on the Sabbath they went to Pilate, and demanded that something should be done to guard the tomb.

‘Sir,’ they cried, ‘we remember that that deceiver said while He was yet alive, In three days will I rise again. Command therefore that His sepulchre be made sure till the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead ; so the last error shall be worse than the first.’

The Roman Governor did not give them the encouragement they asked, but made an ambiguous reply, ‘Ye have a guard : go your way, make it as sure as ye can.’

Without losing any time, the enemies of Christ ‘went, and made the sepulchre sure,’ sealing the massive stone, and then as a final precaution, setting a watch of Roman soldiers to guard the cave until the third day was passed.

All through the hours of that hopeless Sabbath

night the sentries paced to and fro guarding, as they thought, the body of a crucified malefactor, lest His friends, a few fishermen, might attempt to steal it away.

The legionaries may well have laughed at such elaborate precautions. They knew that on our Lord's arrest the dispirited disciples had all forsaken Him and fled. The Roman soldiers had no fear that these despondent men would ever rally to the cause of the Nazarene.

But they soon discovered the Jews had good ground for their fears ; 'Vain the watch, the stone, the seal !' Suddenly the ground shook under their feet. There was a great earthquake, and an angel, whose appearance 'was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow,' rolled away the stone that guarded the mouth of the cave, and sat thereon.

The watch stood rooted to the ground with fear, trembling from head to foot, until recovering their senses, they rushed to tell the chief Priests of their terrifying experience.

The story of the soldiers struck a chill to the hearts of the Scribes and Pharisees. They decided in Council that at all costs the report must be suppressed or explained away. And so, on condition that the guard said the disciples had come by night and stolen the body of Jesus while they slept, the chief Priests gave the sentries a handsome bribe, and promised to absolve them from all responsibility before the Governor. What Pilate thought when he heard the news we do not know. Did the warning of his wife come to his mind ? Did he believe the 'King of the Jews' had, by breaking the bars of death, given a crowning proof of His Majesty ?

Imagine the scene on that first Easter morn as the

women set out for the garden tomb. Above the hills in the east the first flush of dawn began to appear in the sky as vague as the blue haze that softens the features in a landscape. To these women it was the promise of Springtime ; a promise which grew brighter as the brilliancy of the stars was dimmed by the break of day. It may well have been one of those bright unclouded dawns when the pure and limpid atmosphere seems to vibrate with threads of gossamer.

The first to arrive at the sepulchre on that memorable morning were devoted women, carrying with them spices to embalm the body of their Saviour, according to Eastern custom. Joseph and Nicodemus had wrapped that body in a fine linen cloth, containing myrrh and aloes, and now these faithful followers of Christ had come with the precious ointment with which to anoint it.

As Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome and Joanna reached the tomb, they found to their amazement, the dark entrance to the cave gaping open in front of them. In the growing light they were able to distinguish the stone with the broken seal, lying a short distance away.

Their first feeling was one of dismay. Mary Magdalene, stricken with a great grief lest the body of her beloved Lord had been stolen, cried out in an agony of sorrow, ' They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.'

Summoning all their courage, the women crossed the threshold of the sepulchre. At first they could distinguish nothing. Then, to their astonishment, an angel, whose garments shone like newly-fallen snow amidst the surrounding darkness, addressed them saying, ' Be not amazed ; ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, which hath been crucified : He is



On the road to Emmaus.

risen ; He is not here : behold the place where they laid Him ! Tell His disciples and Peter, He goeth before you unto Galilee : there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you.' All four left the tomb trembling and greatly surprised, but Mary Magdalene lingered, and the others went on to the city without her.

Attracted by she knew not what, Mary turned round, and saw a man standing beside her. At first, she did not recognize Him. 'Woman, why weepest thou ? whom seekest thou ?' He asked. Mary, supposing him to be the gardener, answered : ' If thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.'

Jesus, moved by her love and devotion, and her cry of inconsolable grief, spoke one word. But He spoke now in the familiar voice she could never forget : ' Mary ! '

Then, as one awaking out of a dream she recognized Him as her Lord for whom she sought. ' Rabboni ! Master ! ' she cried in tones of wonder and adoration. In an instant she was kneeling at His feet, her hands stretched out as if to grasp Him, but Jesus gently stopped her : ' Touch Me not ; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father : but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father.' Then Christ withdrew as suddenly as He had appeared.

The others, who had hurried away with the good news, found the disciples still numb from the shock of the Crucifixion. They had neither the zeal nor the devotion of these faithful women, and to the apostles the report was incredible. They refused to believe it. The glad tidings were too good to be true,

and they regarded the words of the women as idle tales.

It was at this point that Mary Magdalene confirmed the news. What the others had said was literally and gloriously true. Their words were not the troubled dreams of early morning or the delusions of an excited imagination as the disciples thought. Moreover, Jesus spoke to her, and called her by her own name. He had bidden Mary make all speed to tell the good news to His brethren. The earnestness and sincerity with which she talked at last convinced the apostles.

Then Peter and John hurried to the garden. The women were right. There was the cave with the stone rolled away, and the grave-clothes lying on the ground. Speechless with amazement, they turned, and without delay returned to the others to add their testimony to that of the women. The Lord had risen indeed!

One of the most beautiful incidents recorded in the New Testament occurred that same day.

Two of Jesus' friends, who had heard the story of His Resurrection from the disciples, were on their way to a village named Emmaus, some distance from Jerusalem. The astonishing reports had impressed them, but they were not yet convinced. They loved Christ, and were greatly moved by His sufferings. 'We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel,' they said. But the shameful humiliating death of the Cross had shaken their faith, and their hopes were buried in that grave in the garden.

As they walked wearily along the road, suddenly they saw a Stranger, and as was the custom, they, stopped to exchange greetings. Their new Com-

panion asked them : ‘ What communications are these that ye have one with another as ye walk and are sad ? ’

To them, on that day, there was only one topic of conversation. They could, ‘ of nothing think or speak beside, my Lord, my Love is crucified.’ One of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered in a tone of surprise, ‘ Dost Thou sojourn alone in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days.’

‘ What things ? ’ asked the Stranger.

‘ The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people : and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. It is now the third day since these things come to pass. Moreover, certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb, and when they found not His body they came, saying, they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb, and found it even so, as the women had said : but Him they saw not.’

In a voice of gentle reproach their Companion replied, ‘ O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken ! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory ? ’ And He repeated the prophecies, reminding them of the ‘ Man of Sorrows ’ described so vividly in their prophet Isaiah.

They were nearing Emmaus, but still, ‘ their eyes were holden,’ and they failed to recognize the Stranger. Nevertheless they felt strangely attracted by Him ; so as the setting sun gilded the landscape with its glory, they constrained their unknown Friend saying,

‘Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent.’

He accepted the invitation, and entering into the house, shared their homely meal. Then, as the Guest took the bread and brake it, the two noticed the wound prints on His hands, ‘And their eyes were opened and they knew Him.’

Here before them was the Master whom they had wronged by their doubts. He had overcome the sharpness of death! Their hearts were warmed with a great love, but before His companions had time even to greet Him, He ‘vanished out of their sight.’

As they hastily cleared the table, and set out to return to Jerusalem without delay, they marvelled at their blindness, and said one to another, ‘Was not our heart burning within us, while He spake to us in the way, while He opened to us the Scriptures?’

Cleopas and his friend felt they must lose no time in taking their great news to the Holy City. Tired as they were at close of day, they started at once in the gathering darkness to find the disciples, who were at Jerusalem, and bursting in upon them, they told how Christ was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

As the eleven listened to these new witnesses, there were many in the company who shared their assurance and cried: ‘The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.’

But there were still some who doubted. Mary, in her frenzy of grief, might have been deceived by her imagination; Peter might be seeking a way of escape from the humiliation he had suffered since his cowardly denial of his Master; Cleopas and his companion might be visionaries who had seen nothing

more substantial than an apparition. Moreover, why should Jesus show Himself to the two at Emmaus, and not to His disciples in Jerusalem !

Such were some of the thoughts that shadowed their minds as they sat down to supper. But their doubts were soon to be dispelled.

Suddenly Jesus appeared in their midst. No longer was their faith dependent on the testimony of others. He had come Himself to convince the eleven He was still alive. Looking first at one and then another of the despondent disciples, our Lord said in the calm voice they remembered so well : ' Peace be unto you.'

At first, a great wonder tinged with fear, filled their hearts, for they thought they beheld a spirit. This time they were to be left in no doubt. Fully to persuade them, He shewed the apostles His wounded hands and feet. But before He did so, Jesus calmed their fears with the words : ' Why are ye troubled ? and wherefore do reasonings arise in your heart ? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself : handle Me, and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold Me having.'

Still no one dared to touch Him, lest He should vanish as suddenly as He disappeared at Emmaus. The most reluctant were forced to admit it was the Master who stood before them, yet they shrank from crediting their own senses. To remove the last lingering doubt from their mind, Christ said : ' Have ye anything to eat ? '

He would make clear to them He was not a shadowy phantom by a material manifestation of His presence. The disciples were still slow of heart to believe, so He would eat with them as He had eaten with them in the upper room on the night before His crucifixion. One of them handed our Lord a piece of the broiled

fish that remained in the dish, and a honeycomb, and the Master, coming to the table, took it, 'and did eat before them.'

Thomas, one of the disciples, was not present at the supper. He had fled with the others when Jesus was arrested, and was perhaps hiding in some obscure quarter of the city. The following day his friends went in search of him in a state of great excitement.

Like the other apostles, Thomas had been stunned by the shame of Calvary. He had not yet recovered from the shock, and when rumours of the Resurrection reached him he refused to believe them. His eyes refused to contemplate what his hands could not touch, and he would not credit the report that his Lord had risen again unless there was tangible proof. Yet on one occasion this same disciple had declared his readiness to die with Jesus. His answer to the testimony of those who came with the news that they had seen Christ was : ' Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.'

Thomas denied the witness both of faith and sight, and put his trust in the evidence of his hands. He must touch the very flesh of the Saviour before he will believe.

Eight days later, the eleven were again assembled in the same room. The doors were shut. This time Thomas was present. He still thought his companions were deceived, and was unable to rise to the height of a joy like the one which filled their hearts. Suddenly, through the closed doors, the Presence again appeared, and the silence was broken by the dear familiar Voice : ' Peace be unto you.'

It was Jesus seeking Thomas. This time our Lord

had surely come for the doubting disciple alone. He called him by his own name, and drawing quite close to him, said : ' Reach hither thy finger and see My hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into My side : and be not faithless, but believing.'

Hesitatingly Thomas obeyed. His vanished hopes which, until now, had not been restored even by the testimony of the other disciples, revived, and his spirit glowing with unshakable conviction, he exclaimed : ' My Lord and my God.'

From that moment Thomas belonged wholly to Christ. This was an experience he could never forget, any more than he could forget the gentle reproach of his Master, which has been dear to Christians through all the succeeding centuries : ' Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed : blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.'

Gradually, as the days passed, the eleven grew more accustomed to His presence. They were living in a new world. They realized now, as never before, that their beloved Master was Lord both of life and death. During the forty days between His Resurrection and Ascension, there was one memory they would love to recall. The disciples had been bidden by Jesus to meet Him in Galilee. They were back by the lakeside with all its happy associations of the old days. It was evening, and after long waiting for His promised coming, the seven disciples, Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, James, John, and two others, had on the suggestion of Peter, gone fishing. All night they toiled and rowed, but they caught nothing, just as on that other day three years before, when He had first called them.

Just as day was breaking, they saw, to their surprise, the figure of a Man standing upon the shore. In the



‘A Cloud received Him out of their sight.’

pale light of dawn, they did not recognize Him. Then a familiar Voice came clearly across the water : ' Children, have ye ought to eat ? '

And they answered, ' No. '

' Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find,' He called again. This the disciples did, and soon the net was so full that it was only with difficulty they were able to haul it in.

Then with a flash of spiritual insight, John, the beloved disciple, remembered who the figure was : ' It is the Lord ! ' he cried.

Without a word Simon Peter, as impetuous in action as John was swift to discern the truth, threw on his fisher's coat, and plunged headlong into the sea in order to be the first to greet his Master. The rest entered the little boat, and hurried after Peter. A fire had been kindled on the beach, and some fish were frying upon it. Then for the last time our Lord break bread and distributed it, as He also divided the fishes.

When they had finished their breakfast, Jesus turned to Peter and said : ' Simon, son of John (or Jonas), lovest thou Me more than these '. And with eager love he answered, ' Yea, Lord ; thou knowest that I love Thee '.

Then said Christ, ' Feed My lambs. '

Again He asked the disciple : ' Lovest thou Me ? ' Simon could only repeat the assurance : ' Yea, Lord : thou knowest that I love Thee. '

And for the third time Jesus asked the same question, Peter crying with his whole heart : ' Lord, Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowst that I love Thee.' ' Feed My sheep,' replied the Saviour.

Then our Lord told the disciple by what manner of death he should glorify God, and Peter learned from the lips of his Master on the shores of the

Galilean lake, how he should receive a martyr's crown.

Again, Jesus and His chosen companions wended their way to Jerusalem, and leaving their nets on the beach, they set out for the last time.

For forty days after the Resurrection He had remained among the disciples, but now the time had come for Him to ascend into Heaven, from whence He came.

He appointed a final meeting with the eleven at Jerusalem, who still clung to their hope of a temporal Kingdom. The Crucifixion had banished it from their minds for a time, but it was revived by the Resurrection. 'Lord,' they asked, 'dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?' 'It is not for you to know,' He answered, 'times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.' And now, having given the disciples their commission, He led them forth to Olivet for the last farewell. The hour of parting had come, and there in the neighbourhood of the Bethany He loved so well, the Saviour 'lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He parted from them, and was carried up into Heaven.'

A cloud received their Master, and He was lost to sight. But this was not the end. As the apostles stood gazing upwards, silent and amazed, behold 'two men stood by them in white apparel.' 'Ye men of Galilee,' they said, 'why stand ye looking into Heaven? this Jesus, which was received up from you into Heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye beheld Him going into Heaven.' With that

promise singing in their hearts, the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

And now Thou art in the Shadowless Land,  
Behind the light of the setting sun,  
And the worst is forgotten which Evil planned,  
And the best which Love's glory could win, is won.

We cannot do better than close the book by quoting the first verse of Miss Auber's beautiful hymn :

Our blest Redeemer, ere He breathed  
His tender last farewell,  
A Guide, a Comforter bequeathed,  
With us to dwell.

## EPILOGUE

THE story of the Life of Jesus, which we have been considering, covers a brief period of thirty-three years. But His ascension into Heaven is not the end. It is the beginning of a wider sweep of dominion.

We have followed our Lord from the Manger at Bethlehem to the Cross on Calvary, and after His Resurrection from the dead have seen Him return from whence He came, to 'sit down at the right hand of God.' From that Throne He still rules the hearts of men.

The Gospel story is not merely the record of the three and thirty years Jesus lived on earth. It is also the revelation of Him whose voice still speaks to those who have ears to hear: 'Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one; and I was dead, and behold, I AM ALIVE FOR EVERMORE.'







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